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Friday, 8 June 2007, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Verbeke	(Belgium)
Members:	China	Ms. Chen Peijie
	Congo	Mr. Makayat-Safouesse
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Peru	Mrs. Zanelli
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	Slovakia	Mr. Bartho
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

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07-37400 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend invitations under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Justice George Gelaga King, President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and Mr. Stephen Rapp, Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

It is so decided.

I invite Justice King and Mr. Rapp to take seats at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I wish to draw the attention of the members to photocopies of a future document (S/2007/338), containing a letter dated 7 June 2007 from the representative of Canada, transmitting, in that State's capacity as Chair of the Management Committee of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Court's completion strategy, a summary of the completion strategy and a summary of the Court's completion budget.

I would like to welcome the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, at this meeting.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by the President and the Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

I now give the floor to Justice George Gelaga King, President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Justice King: I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the Security Council for the decision to hold a debate on the Special Court for Sierra Leone. It is a great honour for me, as President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, to have this opportunity to brief Council members on the achievements of the Court and the challenges facing it.

This is a crucial stage in the life of the Special Court. While the Court is undertaking an unprecedented level of judicial activity, it is already beginning to wind down its overall operations in Freetown.

In my remarks, I will update the Council on the status of the legal proceedings at the Special Court and its completion strategy. I will then talk about the impact of the Court on Sierra Leone and its efforts to leave a lasting legacy. Finally, I will describe areas where support of the international community is required to ensure that the Court successfully concludes its mandate.

Four trials of nine individuals are currently before the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Three of these trials are taking place in Freetown, and one — the trial of Mr. Charles Taylor, ex-President of the Republic of Liberia — is being held in The Hague. The trials of alleged members of the Civil Defense Forces (CDF) and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) are before Trial Chamber I. The CDF trial has concluded, and a judgement is expected in July 2007. In the RUF trial, the defense is currently presenting its case. The trials of alleged members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and of Mr. Charles Taylor are before Trial Chamber II. In the AFRC trial, a judgement is expected on 20 June. The trial of Mr. Taylor opened with the Prosecutor's statement on Monday, 4 June, in The Hague.

According to the updated completion strategy, which was distributed to the members of the Council, the Special Court for Sierra Leone will conclude all

judicial activity in Freetown and in The Hague by the end of 2009.

As I have already indicated, two of the trials being conducted in Freetown — the AFRC and the CDF trials — are now concluded and judgements will be delivered in the coming weeks. A third trial, the RUF trial, is scheduled to conclude by December 2007, and a judgement is expected by June 2008. Once a judgement has been delivered in the RUF trial, Trial Chamber I will have concluded its assignments and become functus officio.

With regard to the trial of Mr. Taylor, the projection is that trial proceedings will last until November 2008 and that a judgement on the merits and, if applicable, on sentencing will be issued in June 2009.

Possible appeals may start in Freetown in July 2008. Any appeals proceedings are expected to last approximately six months for each case and to be concluded in the ARFC, CDF and RUF cases by December 2008. It is expected that the Appeals Chamber will complete a possible appeal in the Taylor case by December 2009.

One indictee, Mr. Johnny Paul Koroma, is still at large. If he is apprehended between now and the completion date of December 2009, the completion strategy and the budget of the Court will have to be revisited.

Mr. President, while it is never possible to fully predict the duration of legal proceedings, let me reassure you of the Special Court's commitment to achieving the milestones set forth in the completion strategy and to continuing to review ways to increase efficiency.

The importance of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, however, goes beyond the completion of its legal proceedings. As President of the Special Court and as a Sierra Leonean, I hold the firm belief that the establishment of the Court represents a major contribution to long-term peace and security in Sierra Leone and the subregion. The Court has contributed greatly to the efforts being made in Sierra Leone to resurrect the rule of law and to end impunity.

The Special Court has made its trials and other activities a part of Sierra Leone's national discourse and heritage. The Outreach Section of the Court, through radio programmes, video screenings, town hall meetings and training sessions, has had great success in engaging all sectors of Sierra Leone society. The Outreach Section is now taking steps to ensure that although the trial of Mr. Taylor is taking place in The Hague, the whole of the trial process will be brought to everyone in Sierra Leone and will be made accessible throughout the West African region, particularly in Liberia and beyond.

In addition, it should come as no surprise that, as the Court approaches the end of its mandate, legacy issues are one of its top priorities. The Court is continuing to transfer expertise to Sierra Leoneans through a number of programmes, including training on courtroom interpretation, witness protection and detention standards. The Special Court is also exploring ways to ensure that its buildings, archives and records will be preserved for Sierra Leone's children's children. Potential uses of the Court's physical site after completion of its mandate are being explored in conjunction with the Government of Sierra Leone.

The Special Court has benefited on numerous occasions from the support of the Security Council. I would like to express particular gratitude for the Council's adoption of resolution 1688 (2006), which noted my intention to authorize Trial Chamber II to exercise its functions away from the seat of the Special Court and requested all States to cooperate in the transfer of Mr. Charles Taylor to the Netherlands, and its adoption of resolution 1626 (2005), which extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia to include the protection of the Court's premises by a contingent of Mongolian troops.

To complete its mandate, the Special Court continues to require the support of the Security Council and all Member States. In this regard, I wish to make three appeals.

First, the Special Court requires secure funding. The Court has recently finalized a completion budget that outlines its financial requirements from 1 July 2007 to 31 December 2009. The total budget amount is $89 million. Available funds will be exhausted by November 2007. That is of grave and imminent concern. If the Special Court is to adhere to its completion strategy, it is imperative and vital that there be adequate financial support.

Secondly, the Court seeks the cooperation of the international community in negotiating and concluding

additional agreements for the enforcement of potential sentences and the relocation of witnesses. Sufficient agreements must be in place as soon as possible to avoid delays in the completion of the work of the Court.

Thirdly, I encourage States to support the Court's legacy projects and its consideration of relevant residual issues.

Let me conclude by once again expressing my gratitude to the Security Council and the Deputy Secretary-General for the support that the Special Court has received from the United Nations since its inception. I would be remiss in my duty if I failed to record a special word of thanks to the Management Committee of the Special Court and the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs for the invaluable help and advice the Special Court has received from them at all times.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to Mr. Stephen Rapp, Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Mr. Rapp: In beginning my presentation, I would like to reiterate the comments made by President King and thank the Council for its decision to convene this briefing on the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

I would also like to thank the Security Council for its invaluable role in strengthening peace and security in Sierra Leone and the West African region and for the assistance provided to the Special Court in its pursuit of justice.

As members are well aware, this past Monday saw the commencement of the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor. His trial marks a watershed event for international justice, and the Security Council deserves tremendous credit for helping to make that happen. In 2005, the Council adopted resolution 1638 (2005), which included in the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) the apprehension, detention and transfer of Charles Taylor to the Special Court in the event of his return to Liberia. In March 2006, that resolution made possible Taylor's handover to the Special Court in Freetown after he was arrested attempting to cross the border from Nigeria into Cameroon and had been brought to Liberia. Then, in June 2006, the Council adopted resolution 1688 (2006), requesting that all States cooperate to effect the transfer of Charles Taylor to the Netherlands for the purpose of his trial by the Special Court. That endeavour stands as a remarkable example of collaboration by the international community. In addition, in March 2007 — not very long ago — the Council adopted resolution 1750 (2007) mandating UNMIL to provide support to the Special Court for activities conducted in Liberia with the consent of the Liberian Government.

I am therefore most grateful for this occasion to brief the Security Council in my capacity as Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and to provide the Council with an overview of the work my Office is performing and the challenges that lie ahead.

The Special Court has a very focused jurisdiction. It is mandated to prosecute those who bear the greatest responsibility for the violations of humanitarian law committed in Sierra Leone since 30 November 1996. The Office of the Prosecutor has therefore concentrated its investigations and prosecutions on a limited number of individuals alleged to have been in a position of responsibility and/or command and to have played a major role not only in carrying out the crimes, but also in planning and implementing the campaign of terror that engulfed Sierra Leone for almost 10 years.

The prosecution has issued 13 indictments, all of which were confirmed by a justice of the Special Court. Eleven individuals have been apprehended and transferred into the Court's custody. Two of them, Foday Sankoh and Hinga Norman, died of natural causes while in detention; one was killed in Liberia before arrest; and, as President King indicated, the whereabouts of another remain unknown. Nine individuals are currently before the Court as accused persons in four trials.

The prosecution and defence concluded the presentation of evidence in the trials of Allieu Kondewa and Moinina Fofana of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) and Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) at the end of 2006. With the trial phases of both the CDF and AFRC cases now complete, our Office is awaiting judgments and devoting its efforts to preparing for possible appeals. On 2 August 2006, the Prosecution concluded its case in the trial of Issa Hassan Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The defence began the presentation of its

witnesses on 3 May 2007, and it is anticipated that the trial will be concluded by early 2008.

The Office of the Prosecutor has continued to conduct investigations in Sierra Leone and elsewhere in relation to the case against Charles Taylor. On 7 March 2003, the Special Court confirmed the indictment of Charles Taylor for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. On 29 March 2006, Mr. Taylor was surrendered to the Special Court. Taking note of concerns expressed by regional leaders, the President of the Court formally requested that Taylor be tried in The Hague, in the Netherlands, by a Trial Chamber of the Special Court. On 20 June 2006, Taylor was transferred to The Hague.

Last Monday, four days ago, the case officially began in a courtroom of the International Criminal Court in The Hague. In my opening statement, I made it clear that the prosecution will seek to ensure that the trial embodies the principles of fairness and due process at all times. In the months to come, the prosecution will be calling witnesses and offering documentary evidence that, in our evaluation, will provide strong and compelling proof of Mr. Taylor's culpability in planning, instigating, ordering, aiding and abetting the crimes charged in the indictment: crimes against humanity, war crimes and, additionally, the crime of violating other provisions of international humanitarian law by conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups, or using them to participate actively in hostilities.

The Special Court is indeed the first international criminal tribunal to charge and try individuals for the recruitment of child soldiers as a violation of international humanitarian law. In addition, the Special Court is the first international tribunal to charge forced marriage as a crime against humanity. The judgments as to those crimes that are expected 12 days from today in the AFRC case will be the first of their kind in the history of the world.

These trials are evidence of the international community's commitment to ensuring accountability for crimes as heinous and widespread as those committed in Sierra Leone. They make a clear statement that crimes such as mutilations, the chopping off of arms and legs, the sexual enslavement of women and girls, and the use of child soldiers cannot continue to go unpunished. The historic trial of Charles Taylor shows that, after the mayhem and terror that were rained upon Sierra Leone and its people, there are those in the world who are ready to uphold the law and decide that, no matter how high the position of the person responsible, there will be a day of justice.

As President King indicated, it is expected that the Court will complete its legal proceedings by December 2009. However, the actual implementation of the Court's completion plan will require continued support from all Member States.

In the course of the CDF, AFRC and RUF trials, the prosecution presented 220 witnesses. Overall, 354 have been heard by the Chambers to date. In the Taylor trial, the prosecution estimates that it will be calling 139 witnesses. Many of the witnesses who appear before the Special Court do so at great risk to their and their family's safety, demonstrating courage and determination. The Court has an obligation to protect them and to relocate high profile and vulnerable witnesses. Thus far, the Court has signed agreements for the relocation of witnesses with three countries and entered into ad hoc arrangements with two more. Additional agreements are needed to ensure that all witnesses of the Special Court receive the protection they deserve.

All of the accused before the Special Court have declared themselves to be indigent and are receiving legal assistance at the Court's expense. It is important that the Court's Registry have the capacity to conduct further investigations to ascertain the validity of those claims of indigency. The investigations require extensive cooperation from Member States to track, freeze and gain access to possible assets.

That may lead to the discovery of substantial assets that could also be made available to a national process of victim compensation. In our view of the evidence, the crimes that we are prosecuting were motivated in part by a desire to control and exploit mineral resources. Justice requires that any remaining proceeds of that plunder be made available to its victims. I know of the ongoing efforts of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003) concerning Liberia to implement the freeze of assets of Charles Taylor and his close associates in compliance with Security Council resolution 1532 (2004). The success of those efforts would open the way for compensation for victims and also send a signal to others that they cannot gain from such crimes.

We urge Member States to provide all appropriate legal and technical assistance. We in the Office of the Prosecutor are ready to cooperate in any way to ensure success.

Finally, as Justice King stated, the Special Court needs funding. The Court has demonstrated itself to be a transparent and cost-effective operation. In order to provide Member States with a clear picture of the resources required until the conclusion of its work, a completion budget has been presented for each of the remaining years of its mandate, namely, 2007, 2008 and 2009. Current funds in the Special Court's accounts will be exhausted at end of October 2007. Additional funds of approximately $60 million are needed to finance the Court's operation until the completion of its mandate. The challenges facing the Special Court are serious, and I encourage all Member States to renew their support for the Court and its efforts to ensure justice for the crimes committed in Sierra Leone.

I would like to leave members with these words from our opening statement in the Taylor trial.

> "The people of Sierra Leone have a saying: no matter how long the night, light will come again. For years the accused's crimes have remained in the dark. Today we start to shed light on his responsibility for the suffering of the people of Sierra Leone."

Let us continue to work together to help the people of Sierra Leone look forward to a future of light and of hope.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Rapp for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro.

The Deputy Secretary-General: It gives me great pleasure to be here today as a witness to the significant achievements of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. After listening to both the President and the Prosecutor speak about the work and goals of the Special Court, I feel humbled but, at the same time, encouraged. It was only five years ago that an 11-year conflict, characterized by indescribable brutality and the systematic use of mutilation, abduction, sexual violence and the murder of civilians, came to an end in Sierra Leone.

The first of its kind, the Special Court was established on the basis of an agreement between the United Nations and a Member State — Sierra Leone — at the request of the Security Council and the Government of Sierra Leone. This new hybrid model of international justice sits on the territory where the crimes were committed and therefore has the unique advantage of benefiting from both international and Sierra Leonean personnel.

The Special Court has faced numerous difficulties and challenges since it was established. However, it is clear that tremendous efforts have been made by both dedicated staff members and the people of Sierra Leone to prosecute those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in Sierra Leone since 30 November 1996.

Like the other ad hoc Tribunals currently in existence, the Special Court prosecutes war crimes and crimes against humanity. Uniquely, however, this Court has also prosecuted all its indictees for the enlisting of children under the age of 15 to participate in hostilities. Notably, building on the jurisprudence of the ad hoc tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the Special Court has confronted the tradition of impunity for gender-based crimes, prosecuting offences such as forced marriage and recognizing the unique nature of the sexual crimes perpetrated primarily against women and girl children during this conflict. For the first time, sexual slavery as a crime against humanity is being expressly prosecuted under international law.

Today the Special Court has demonstrated how it has discharged the heavy responsibility it assumed in 2002 to ensure that perpetrators of crimes are brought to justice. In so doing, the Court has contributed to the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in Sierra Leone. It is often said that one of the Special Court's greatest accomplishments is its Outreach Section. It is truly remarkable how the Section has enlisted the support of the general public in Sierra Leone and the neighbouring region. The Section effectively disseminates information about the trials before the Special Court at the grass-roots level, providing accessible information on the application of the basic values of the rule of law in the restoration of peace.

The Special Court has joined other international tribunals in offering hope to future generations — a

hope that the rule of law may prevail in the affairs of men and women of all nations and that those whose deeds offend the conscience of mankind shall not go unpunished.

On the day of the opening of the Charles Taylor trial, the Secretary-General encouraged all Member States to continue their support and contributions to the Special Court. Today, the Special Court has specifically sought the assistance of the international community through financial support. However, the Court also requires the cooperation of Member States in the enforcement of sentences, the relocation of witnesses and the subsequent residual and legacy issues that will naturally arise from its activities. I strongly reiterate those requests.

It is imperative that the international community continue to generously support the Special Court, ensuring that it has both the human and financial resources necessary to conclude its mandate. The Court constitutes an important milestone in the fight against impunity. It marks the considerable achievement of those who have worked selflessly to ensure a lasting legacy of justice and of the rule of law, of which the Sierra Leonean people, Africa and the international community at large can be proud.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her statement.

I shall now give the floor to members of the Council.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): Allow me also to thank the President and Prosecutor of the Special Court for their very informative briefings and for all the work they are doing to help bring justice to the people of Sierra Leone. I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for attending this meeting and for her words of support for the Court, which is a very important cause of the Council.

Less than eight years ago, military intervention was necessary to save Sierra Leone from total collapse into civil war. The progress made since has been a tribute to the efforts of the Sierra Leonean people, of the United Nations and of others. My Prime Minister, Tony Blair, paid a recent visit to Freetown. He was able to see and remark on the turnaround in Sierra Leone's fortunes over the past few years, which is truly impressive. But, as those who have spoken before me have said, there is no room for complacency. Sierra Leone is still fragile, and the upcoming elections — the first since the departure of United Nations peacekeepers — will be a milestone in the country's development. It is only right that the Peacebuilding Commission should continue to help Sierra Leone deal with its post-conflict future.

Against that background, the Court has an even more important role to play in Sierra Leone's recovery than the inherent good that bringing justice to the country entails. We welcome the opportunity for the Special Court to brief the Council on its work. This is a very special occasion. We are pleased that it also gives the Council an opportunity to demonstrate its support for the role that the Special Court has played in the restoration of peace and security in Sierra Leone.

It is particularly appropriate that, as other speakers have noted, this meeting is taking place during the same week as the start of the Taylor trial. It enables the Council to send a strong message that nobody is above the law and that there can be no impunity for crimes against humanity and war crimes. We are confident that the Special Court will ensure a fair and expeditious trial for Charles Taylor.

My country is a strong supporter of the Special Court, as we are a friend to Sierra Leone, and we have demonstrated that support through practical and concrete actions. We are one of the largest financial contributors to the Special Court, and last month made an additional contribution of $4 million, bringing our total contribution since 2002 to some $23 million.

We are an active member of the Special Court's Management Committee here in New York. We were pleased to be able to agree to imprison Charles Taylor if convicted, and welcomed the fact that that helped unlock the transfer of Taylor to The Hague in June 2006.

With our assistance, the BBC World Service Trust has developed a project in support of the Court's important and innovative outreach work, enabling the people of Sierra Leone and Liberia to have access to the Taylor trial.

We believe that the Special Court has set out a sound basis for its completion strategy. It remains important that the Court continue to strive for the early completion of its work in line with that strategy and, where possible, to deliver further efficiencies and budgetary savings.

Equally, it is essential that international community help ensure that the Special Court has the resources that it needs to complete its valuable work. We would therefore like to urge all Member States to respond to Justice King's call for further financial contributions and the provision of other forms of assistance in terms of sentence enforcement and witness relocation.

Finally, it is vital that the important achievements of the Special Court be preserved for the future. We urge the Court to develop its strategy on its legacy, in consultation with the Council's ongoing work in this area in respect of the international tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda.

We should like to pledge our support for the continuing work of the Court.

Ms. Wolcott Sanders (United States of America): On behalf of the United States, I would like to join others in welcoming the President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Justice George Gelaga King, Chief Prosecutor Stephen Rapp, and Acting Registrar Herman von Hebel to New York and to the Security Council. Their briefings today come at a critical time in the Court's work, with proceedings in three cases still under way in Freetown and the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor having begun on 4 June in The Hague.

The United States also welcomes the participation in today's discussions of Deputy Secretary-General Migiro. Her presence underscores the importance that the United Nations and members of the international community continue to attach to the successful completion of the Special Court's work in order to bring a sense of justice to the innocent victims of the terrible crimes and atrocities that were perpetrated in Sierra Leone.

The United States has been a strong supporter of the Special Court from its inception. We played an instrumental role in drafting and negotiating resolution 1315 (2000), which called on the Secretary-General to conclude an agreement with the Government of Sierra Leone to create an independent special court to prosecute persons "who bear the greatest responsibility" (para. 3) for the serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law that were committed in the territory of Sierra Leone since 30 November 1996. The successful completion of the Court's work remains a top United States priority.

The United States commends the commitment and hard work of the many men and women, a large number of whom are Sierra Leonean, who have been working to ensure that the Special Court fulfils its mandate. The efforts of these dedicated men and women have contributed to a number of important precedents, the most notable of which was the indictment of Charles Taylor — who was then a sitting head of State — on charges of crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Additionally, the Special Court for Sierra Leone represents the first test of a new model of international justice — namely, an independent, international court of mixed jurisdiction and composition seated in the country where the crimes were committed. One important aspect of the Special Court's legacy will be the future of this new model of international justice. The efficient and timely completion of the Special Court's work would serve as testimony to the efficacy of the model to meet future needs. Accordingly, we urge the leadership of the Special Court to do everything in its power to address inefficiencies at the Court and to avoid unnecessary delays in the proceedings, in order to set a solid precedent for the future of this new model.

The United States has contributed $35 million to support the work of the Special Court since its creation in 2002 and intends to make additional contributions to the Court to ensure that it completes its important work. More than 40 other States have also provided funds to support the Court. The United States welcomes that broad base of past support, but notes that the Court will exhaust the funds currently available to it in a few months. The United States therefore appeals to all Governments to help guarantee, through additional contributions, that justice will be served, that impunity will not be tolerated and that peace and stability can be sustained in Sierra Leone and in the region.

Mr. Makayat-Safouesse (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I would like, on behalf of my delegation, to associate myself with the expressions of appreciation that have been addressed to the President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, as well as to the Prosecutor.

The debate that has brought us together today provides Congo with an opportunity to reaffirm its ongoing commitment to the fight against impunity. It can never be stressed enough that, in societies in conflict, such as ours, justice lies at the very heart of

the objectives of national reconciliation, reconstruction and development. Hence the importance that we accord to the role being played and the work being done by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. In organizing the trial of Charles Taylor, the Court is serving the objectives of peace and security, as set out in the Charter, which form the very basis of the Security Council's mission. Furthermore, the exercise of international criminal justice will make it possible to affirm that henceforth the perpetrators of crimes and misdeeds will answer for their actions sooner or later.

It is on the basis of that conviction that my country fully supports the work of the Special Court and will, of course, provide it with all cooperation necessary to enable it to fulfil its mandate. In this respect, we would also like to associate ourselves with the appeal made here to place at the disposal of the Special Court the means it needs to carry out its mandate.

In conclusion, I would like to say that we are convinced that in the final analysis — above and beyond the implementation of the Court's completion strategy — the international community as a whole will benefit from a legacy that could prove very useful for the development of international criminal justice.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation too would like to thank the President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, as well as the Prosecutor, for having taken the initiative to come to the Council to brief us on the work of the Court. It is legitimate that the Security Council, which endorsed the Court's creation, should be kept informed of the progress of an institution that is essential for justice and reconciliation.

My delegation would also like to welcome the presence at this debate of Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, the Deputy Secretary-General.

Since our previous meeting devoted to the work of the Court two years ago (see S/PV.5185), a major event has occurred — one which France welcomed and to which the Council contributed: the arrest of Charles Taylor, his transfer to The Hague in accordance with resolution 1688 (2006) and, a few days ago, the start of his trial. A former head of State answering before a criminal court for atrocities which he encouraged and supported sends a very strong message which, beyond Sierra Leone and the region, is universal in scope. It is a message of hope for the victims of the most serious crimes and for all those who are combating impunity. The phase of the presentation of evidence, which will soon begin, will be crucial in that respect. It is also a warning for those responsible for such crimes wherever they may be. Progress in international criminal justice, and in particular the creation of the International Criminal Court, must prevent such persons from escaping justice, and the Security Council must support that progress.

It is important for the Security Council to be able to follow the Court's implementation of its recently revised completion strategy. Since the Court started functioning nearly five years ago, much has been achieved. France welcomes, in particular, the fact that three trials involving the various factions that participated in the conflict which tore Sierra Leone apart have concluded or are coming to an end. France notes that work should finish by the end of 2008 in Freetown and by the end of 2009 in The Hague.

The Court recently established a budget covering the period of the remaining work. It is certainly a useful tool which will make it possible to better assess the financial effort expected of us. The transfer of the Charles Taylor trial to The Hague has naturally had a major impact on the budget, but, in our view, the security considerations that justified the transfer remain completely valid.

For France, which has been contributing to the financing of the Court for several years, it is essential that the accomplishments of the first years of work not be jeopardized by a shortage of resources. In that spirit, we will consider the appeal for new contributions. Indeed, we want the Court to be successful, not only for justice and peace in Sierra Leone and the subregion, but also for international justice.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is the first mixed tribunal created with the assistance of the United Nations, has been a model that has inspired other jurisdictions, in particular the Special Tribunal for Lebanon whose establishment has just been sanctioned by the Council. It has broken new ground in several areas, in particular through its communications strategy, as well as through its coordination with the United Nations Mission in Liberia and, in the Taylor trial, its cooperation with the International Criminal Court. That progress, together with its judgements, will be part of the Court's legacy to us.

The Court has also started to reflect upon residual activities after the end of the trials. The Security Council, which is beginning its work on the legacy and residual activities of the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, must take those reflections into account. Having approved the creation of the Court, it must also concern itself with its legacy.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm here that France fully supports the fight against impunity and the work for justice being carried out by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Mrs. Zanelli (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to express its gratitude for the briefings given by the President and the Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. We are grateful too for the work being carried out in that very important institution of international justice. My delegation also wishes to welcome the presence of Deputy Secretary-General Migiro at this meeting.

Peru firmly supports the fight against impunity. My delegation therefore appreciates the opportunity to be briefed this afternoon on the activities of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. This meeting will enable all States Members of the United Nations, and public opinion, to be informed about the work of the Special Court and about the challenges it faces. With two trials now concluded, with sentencing scheduled for next June and July, a trial that is to conclude by the end of the year and the recent start of the trial of the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, the Court has shown that it is making progress in the task of bringing to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and the laws of Sierra Leone, thus bolstering the fight against impunity and promoting reconciliation and the achievement of lasting peace, not only in Sierra Leone but throughout the subregion.

The beginning of the Charles Taylor trial marks an important milestone in the work of the Court. The fact that this former head of State who allegedly committed serious atrocities has now been brought to justice shows us that no one is above the law and that the commission of serious crimes cannot remain unpunished. In today's world impunity is not tolerated. Furthermore, the fact that the trial is taking place in The Hague with the logistical cooperation of the International Criminal Court shows how that young institution is engaged in the fight against impunity and confirms the wisdom of the international community's decision to conceive and establish a permanent judicial institution.

As the Court has unambiguously indicated with its active and innovative outreach plan to publicize its activities and proceedings so that the trials will have the proper impact in Sierra Leone and throughout the subregion, it is crucial that the trials be accessible. The local population must clearly see that justice is being served. That is particularly relevant in the Taylor case, as was stressed by the Security Council in resolution 1688 (2006). We praise the Special Court's work in that area, and we encourage it to continue it.

The President and the Prosecutor have shared with us information on the Court's completion strategy, under which all judicial activities are expected to end by the end of 2009. In the context of the formulation and implementation of the completion strategy, residual aspects and the legacy of the Court are especially important. In particular, we wish to highlight those aspects relating to the creation of conditions and capacities within the local justice system to try those responsible for crimes that fall outside the Court's mandate. Indeed, in order to comply with the completion strategy and, above all, in order to fulfil its mandate vis-à-vis the people of Sierra Leone, the Court requires resources and cooperation.

We thank those who have contributed financially to the Court's activities, and we call for the support of States able to provide it. The Court requires the cooperation of States on a number of matters, as the Council has heard this afternoon.

I will conclude by encouraging the Special Court for Sierra Leone to continue implementing its mandate and bringing justice to the people of Sierra Leone, which is indispensable in order to lay the foundation for lasting peace and a prosperous future, not only in the country but also in the subregion.

Ms. Chen Peijie (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I too wish to thank the President, Justice King, and Prosecutor Rapp of the Special Court for Sierra Leone for their briefings. At the same time, I wish to thank Deputy Secretary-General Migiro for her presence at our meeting today.

I wish to note that after hearing the briefings, we see that since the Special Court started briefing the

Council two years ago, it has made real progress in its work, and that is commendable.

Here, I wish to make the following points. First, China has always supported the work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and will continue to do so in the future.

Secondly, the Special Court has made progress in its trials, as we have heard. Some trials have been completed and some are still under way, including the trial of Charles Taylor, which is being carried out by the Special Court in The Hague, using the facilities of the International Criminal Court. We believe that independent and fair trials help to promote national reconciliation, peace and stability in the region concerned. Therefore, we look forward to the smooth progress and early completion of the relevant trials.

Thirdly, we are pleased to learn that the Special Court has also made steady progress in its completion strategy. It has amended its rules of procedure and evidence in order to enhance the efficiency of trials, and it has set very specific goals for its work. We have also noted that the Special Court has begun to address outstanding issues, including capacity-building in local judicial institutions. All of that is to be commended. We hope that the Special Court will continue to work actively to achieve its various working goals as it continues to implement its completion strategy.

Fourthly, we heard from the President and the Prosecutor of the Special Court that the Court continues to face a number of difficulties. In particular, they referred to the issue of cooperation. I believe that that is a very important issue indeed. Therefore, I should like to call on those countries in a position to do so to continue to provide support to the Special Court and to take a more cooperative approach so as to help it resolve issues such as the enforcement of potential sentences and the relocation of witnesses.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate on the Special Court for Sierra Leone. It gives us an opportunity to be briefed on the latest developments relating to the Special Court and on the difficulties facing its President, Justice George Gelaga King. I welcome Justice King to the Security Council and thank him for his briefing and for submitting the Court's completion strategy and budget. I also wish to thank Mr. Stephen Rapp, Prosecutor of the Special Court, for his comprehensive briefing.

Earlier this week, we saw the beginning of the most important stage in the work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone: initial proceedings in the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor at The Hague. That proves that no one, regardless of his or her position, is above the law and that everyone, regardless of the crimes that he or she has committed, has the right to due process, as stated by Prosecutor Rapp last January.

The reaching of this stage responds to the aspirations of the people of Sierra Leone to achieve justice, now that they have put their conflict behind them and set out on the path towards building peace and prosperity with determination and resolve, and with the assistance of the international community. However, the effects of the past cannot be erased without putting an end to the phenomenon of impunity and implementing the rule of law in accordance with national and international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Since the last briefing to the Council, by Justice Ayoola, former President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, in May 2005 (see S/PV.5185), the Special Court has made concrete progress in carrying out its mandate under Security Council resolution 1315 (2000) and the 2002 Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It has concluded the trial of members of the Civil Defence Forces and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, and the trial of members of the Revolutionary United Front will be concluded soon.

As we just heard, and as stated in the documents submitted by the President of the Special Court to the Secretary-General concerning plans and expectations for the future completion of the Court's mandate, the Court will continue to carry out its work, including appeals, until late in 2009. While we recognize that the Court needs to finish its current work within the specified time frame and as soon as possible — particularly since some trials have exceeded the timelines set for their conclusion — we also stress the need to strike a balance between compliance with the time frames and the full, efficient and satisfactory fulfilment of the Court's mandate, as well as the need to guarantee the right of the accused to due process in fair trials.

Because the Special Court for Sierra Leone is an international criminal court that has been funded since

its inception through voluntary contributions, and given that the financing available to the Court will be sufficient only until the end of this year, we call on all parties to provide the financial contributions necessary for the Court to continue its work. We commend those who have already provided financial contributions to the Court.

We welcome the Special Court's commitment to accepted legal norms and principles and to transparency and effectiveness in its work, as well as determination to bequeath to the people of Sierra Leone, in addition to the material resources of the country's legal system, a legacy to future generations in the country and elsewhere that embodies the resolve to achieve justice and to eradicate impunity for those who commit war crimes or crimes against humanity.

Finally, while we regret that the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor is not taking place on the African continent — owing to the fact that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda is busy developing its own completion strategy and because of the lack of space on its premises and the lack of other options on the African continent — we also stress that it is essential that the peoples of the subregion be able to follow the proceedings of the trial, including through closed-circuit television. We look forward to the continuance of the judicial proceedings at The Hague, since they will help to reveal the truth and to establish security and stability in Sierra Leone and the surrounding region.

Mr. Bartho (Slovakia): I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to Justice George Gelaga King, President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and to the Prosecutor, Stephen Rapp, for their briefings to the Security Council.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered by the representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union. We do not wish to repeat the same points, so I would like to highlight only a few issues.

We welcome the commencement of the trial of Charles Taylor. Although Taylor's trial is taking place at the International Criminal Court, in The Hague, it is and will remain a trial conducted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. It is necessary to emphasize this and to keep explaining it constantly to the public, in particular in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

In this context, Slovakia welcomes and supports measures aimed at ensuring that proceedings are accessible to West Africans, including facilitating the attendance of journalists and civil society representatives from Liberia and Sierra Leone, preparing video and audio summaries of Taylor's trial for dissemination throughout Sierra Leone, and making broadcasts of Taylor's trial available at the Court's premises in Freetown.

The second issue I want to mention is the outreach programme of the Sierra Leone Court. The innovative work of the Court's Outreach Section, which continues to bring the Court's activities and accomplishments to every town and village in Sierra Leone, to schools and colleges in the country and to the people of the subregion, deserves high acknowledgement and can set a good example for the work of other tribunals.

Finally, I would like to underline our full support for the Court and also for the successful completion of its work.

Ms. Qwabe (South Africa): My delegation wishes to thank The Honourable Justice George Gelaga King and the Prosecutor for the Special Court, Mr. Stephen Rapp, for their briefings to the Council. We also thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her comments.

My delegation is pleased with the progress made since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1315 (2000) and the subsequent agreement signed between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone establishing the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The operational and logistical challenges that faced the Court have since largely been addressed, and the Court is effectively and judiciously executing its mandate. Significant progress has been made in the three trials before the Special Court, and we look forward to the conclusion of the Revolutionary United Front trial later this year. This bodes well for the implementation of the completion strategy in 2009, as set out by the Special Court.

South Africa believes that the prosecution of those responsible for the violation of international humanitarian law, as well as the law of Sierra Leone, will serve to discourage others from committing human rights violations in the future.

A hallmark of the Special Court has been its contribution to precedent-setting in international humanitarian law, as well as the aspect of national ownership of the Court. In that regard, my delegation is particularly encouraged by the large number of Sierra Leoneans employed by the Special Court, by its work in the area of public information and dissemination of information, and by the legacy project to ensure that the role of the Court in upholding the supremacy of the rule of law resonates in Sierra Leone long after the completion of its work. Those initiatives are noteworthy and innovative, and we congratulate the Special Court on those remarkable achievements.

Whereas significant progress has been made in fulfilling the mandate of the Special Court, the continued assistance of the international community remains critical. The projected budget for the next three years totals $90 million, and international donors are urged to continue their support for the work of the Special Court. In addition to the subject of funding, my delegation wishes to call on all States to cooperate, support and rally behind the appeal by Justice King for concluding agreements for the enforcement of sentences, the relocation of witnesses and the identification of assets of convicted offenders.

In conclusion, South Africa believes that the holding of free and fair elections on 11 August 2007 will contribute to a peaceful and stable Sierra Leone and that the Special Court's functions are also integral in the creation of a stable political and security environment. South Africa will continue to support the Government of Sierra Leone, both bilaterally and through the Peacebuilding Commission, in strengthening its institutions during the post-conflict reconstruction phase.

Mr. Suescum (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express my gratitude for the detailed briefings and information given by the President of the Special Court and the Prosecutor, and also the information given by the Deputy Secretary-General.

Panama would like to take advantage of this opportunity to acknowledge the essential work done by the Special Court and its vital contribution to the establishment of the rule of law in Sierra Leone and in the subregion.

We cannot overlook the contribution that the Court has made to jurisprudence on questions such as the legal effects of the amnesty called for in the Lomé Peace Agreement, or the irrelevance of the status of head of State or the jurisdiction of special courts in accordance with international law.

Moreover, as mentioned by the Prosecutor, the Court has been the first to deal with various types of crimes under international law, as well as crimes against humanity and war crimes. The overall success and effectiveness of the Special Court in its mission to tackle impunity through the trials of those who are primarily responsible is an important example to be followed in Africa as well as in other regions.

In the period remaining before the Special Court until December 2009, it will be important for it to be able to guarantee that its work is in accordance with the highest standards of international law. Therefore, it is crucial for the international community to provide the necessary resources to the Court.

Furthermore, a trial is very similar to an election, where after the outcome there is still much work left to be done. The Prosecutor mentioned steps that have been undertaken to protect and relocate witnesses. It would be interesting to know a little more about the projections being considered for after 2009 in cases such as the post-appeal process, adequate treatment of prisoners and victims, the conservation of documents, guaranteeing that these documents would be accessible, and so forth.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (spoke *in Russian*): Like other Council members, we would like to thank the chief officials of the Special Court for their briefing today. We feel that this body is one of the important components in the fight against impunity. Beyond any doubt, its activities give effective assistance to establishing peaceful processes in the region.

The Russian delegation notes that the judicial processes within the Special Court for Sierra Leone are working quite successfully, and we note a positive dynamic in the work of the Court. In our view, we need to maintain the momentum built up by the Special Court over the next few years.

Of course, a milestone in the work of the Court was the capture of the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, the chief accused by this legal body. The Security Council adopted a resolution on the transfer of consideration of the Taylor case to The Hague a year ago. It must be recognized that quite a

long time passed between the Security Council's decision and the actual start of the hearings on this case on 4 June 2007. Moreover, as we have learned, the hearings that started last Monday were interrupted and their resumption is planned only for 25 June. We would be grateful to the representatives of the Court if they could tell us what the reason was for the delay in the consideration of the case and how realistic the predicted timeline is for its conclusion by the end of 2008 and for sentencing by mid-2009.

We of course attach great importance to this question, because this case being considered by the Special Court for Sierra Leone is a serious precedent, not only from the point of view of international law, but also because it could have a positive impact on the peaceful processes in the region and on the African continent.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I wish to thank President King and Prosecutor Rapp for their presentations and congratulate them on the Court's achievements in bringing to justice the alleged perpetrators of the most heinous international crimes and contributing to the development of international criminal law. I also wish to welcome the participation in our proceedings today of the Deputy Secretary-General, Mrs. Migiro.

Italy associates itself with the statement that will be delivered by the presidency of the European Union later on.

We strongly support the work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and praise its contribution to the restoration of peace and stability in that country. The Special Court has been crucial in reaffirming the rule of law as one of the pillars of civil society, as has also been discussed in the Peacebuilding Commission. The conclusion of the first cases, with the imminent delivery of judgements, is only the first tangible outcome of the huge effort that began with the establishment of the Court in 2002.

With the recent start of the trial against Charles Taylor, the Court initiated a new phase of its work that will mark a milestone in the field of international criminal justice. We strongly recommend, however, that media attention to the Taylor trial not distract the Court from continuing its activities in Freetown with a view to accomplishing its completion strategy.

Several statements this afternoon have recalled the Special Court's contributions to the development of international criminal law. We would like to mention the investigations into the use of child soldiers and forced marriages, which will surely result in precedent-setting decisions in the area of international crimes against the weakest part of the civilian population and which have tragic and long-standing repercussions in civil societies.

I would like to refer briefly to the Special Court's affirmation of the crucial role of justice in the peace and reconciliation process. Peace and justice must go hand in hand in societies that have been disrupted by civil wars. The Special Court proves that, with the support of the international community and the Security Council, with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, a judicial institution can be set up in the very place where horrendous crimes have been committed.

The establishment of the Special Court in Sierra Leone is per se a fundamental outreach. But that is not enough. Italy is proud of its contribution, especially through the European Union, to the several outreach activities of the Special Court, and we hope that these activities will continue. At the same time, we believe that an effort must be made to ensure that the people of Sierra Leone will continue to perceive the Special Court as a friendly institution whose premises will go on serving the country even after the Court has concluded its work.

As regards the functioning of the Special Court, Italy welcomes the recent decisions aimed at making the Court more efficient and at overcoming some management difficulties. The adoption a few days ago of the budget for the 2007-2009 period is a step in the right direction, towards forecasting the financial needs of the Court in the next two years, thereby paving the way for a smooth completion strategy.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): Allow me to thank the President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Mr. Justice King, and the Prosecutor, Mr. Rapp, for their presentations. I also thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her statement.

It is gratifying to note that the Special Court — which has been in operation since July 2002, with the mandate of prosecuting persons who have the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law — has been making steady progress towards its completion strategy. Indeed, we recognize the invaluable role

being played by the Special Court in the prosecution of the serious crimes committed in the civil wars since 1996. It is through justice and closure for the victims of war crimes and other atrocities that the basis for peace, reconciliation and stability can be laid in Sierra Leone and provide the standard for the administration of transitional justice in the West African subregion.

The Court's completion strategy is therefore of great importance. Without the conclusion of the most serious cases, the mandate of the Court will not be fully discharged. There should be no impunity for the crimes and atrocities committed during the civil war. On this point, we view the commencement of proceedings against Charles Taylor in The Hague as a significant development in the fight against impunity, and we hope that the other perpetrators of heinous crimes in the civil war will also be brought to justice.

From the report of the President, it is reasonable to assume that the completion strategy of the Court is on track with two milestones achieved — the completion of the hearings in the Civil Defense Forces and Armed Forces Revolutionary Council cases. We also wish to welcome the progress made by the Court in amending the Rules of Procedure and Evidence, since without efficiency in the proceedings, the attainment of stated objectives and milestones may be compromised.

The Court's outreach programme is to be commended. In the fight against impunity and in the quest for justice for the most serious crimes, it is important that the Court's proceedings in particular, and justice in general, should not be seen as a remote and distant process with no relevance to the lives of citizens. Justice must be brought to the people. By creating a sense of participation for the victims and the population at large, we bring in an element of ownership and understanding of the process. That will leave a lasting impact on the population.

Finally, we call on the international community to give the Court the fullest support to discharge its mandate by making available adequate resources for its budget.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): First of all, let me join others in thanking the President of the Court, the Prosecutor of the Court and the Deputy Secretary-General for their briefings.

Indonesia welcomes the Special Court's steady progress towards the fulfilment of its mandate and the implementation of its completion strategy.

Indonesia consistently condemns gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as other serious crimes, must be brought to justice.

In this regard, we welcome the start of the trials of individuals, including the trial of Charles Taylor by the Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague. This trial could greatly contribute to the strengthening of the rule of law and also create confidence in the people of West Africa and beyond that there is no impunity for crime, no matter how powerful the perpetrators may be. We hope that the trial will be conducted fairly in accordance with international standards and with respect to the presumption of innocence unless proven otherwise.

Despite the current efforts by the Government of Sierra Leone, there is much more to be done in healing the wounds of the people and in consolidating peace. It is hard to console the people of Sierra Leone who were battered by the actions of Charles Taylor for six horrendous years. We expect and are hopeful, therefore, that his trial will contribute to advancing national reconciliation and to furthering the sense of accountability among the public.

At the same time, we believe that it is important for the Security Council to focus on the big picture of the country. While we fully support the Special Court for Sierra Leone, my delegation considers it to be one of the several critical means to achieve a sustainable peace in Sierra Leone, which will reduce the chances of relapsing into conflict.

With most institutions ravaged by the 10-year civil war, it is understandable that the Government is still facing difficulties with its present scarce resources and inadequate infrastructure. The international community therefore needs to step up its support to the Government of Sierra Leone not only in assisting it in the conduct of upcoming elections, but in helping it to expand its capacities across the various sectors for the long-term recovery.

To conclude, Indonesia is hopeful that the process of the Special Court for Sierra Leone will run smoothly

within the time frame of the mandate, leading to the strengthening of peace and harmony in Sierra Leone.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Belgium.

At the outset, I should like to thank President King and Prosecutor Rapp of the Special Court for their clear statements.

Belgium welcomes the launch this week of Charles Taylor's trial before the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The holding of the trial is proof that there is no longer any question of impunity for persons accused of the most serious crimes, whatever their rank.

My delegation has stressed on several occasions that peace and impunity are never compatible. That was the spirit underlying the creation of the Court. According to a recent study, 90 per cent of the population of Sierra Leone considers that the Court has helped to establish peace. There could be no better illustration of how clearly the people directly concerned recognize the Court's contribution.

One of the Special Court's important innovations is that it may issue the first sentence for the recruitment of child soldiers. Indeed, by its decision of 31 May 2004, the Appeals Chamber deemed that the rule prohibiting the recruitment of children under the age of 15 was part of customary international humanitarian law. That will certainly send an unmistakable signal to armed groups throughout the world that seek the unacceptable involvement of children in armed conflict. We cannot forget that the conflict in Sierra Leone featured extreme brutality of which children and women were the chief victims.

The victims' perception that they have received justice is crucial. In that regard, we stress the outstanding work done by the Court in terms of outreach since its creation, and particularly the communication efforts developed in the context of the Taylor trial.

My delegation welcomes the fact that judgments in the case of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council are expected on 20 June and, in the case of the Civil Defence Forces, in July. That represents an important step forward in the Court's work, which we welcome.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the fact that the Court is expected to conclude its work by the end of 2009. We welcome the two documents recently finalized — the completion strategy of the Court's work and the completion budget for the next three years. Insofar as Belgium's principled support is also expressed in the form of regular contributions to the Court's budget, those documents provide an essential basis for the voluntary contributions that are vital to its work.

December 2009 is no longer so far away, and we must reflect beforehand on the Court's residual functions that will remain to be discharged after it closes. Those include issues of witness protection, the enforcement of sentences, archives and so on. It would be useful in that exercise to seek possible synergies with other jurisdictions that are equally involved in this debate, in particular the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): We thank you, Sir, for convening this important meeting on the Special Court for Sierra Leone. We also welcome the presence here of the President of the Court, George Gelaga King; the Prosecutor, Mr. Stephen Rapp; and the Acting Registrar of the Court, Mr. Herman von Hebel. We also welcome the participation of the Deputy Secretary-General in this debate.

It has now been five years since the Special Court for Sierra Leone was established and seven years since the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, requested the assistance of the United Nations and the international community to help our country answer the cries for justice from our people.

We remain grateful for the quick response to His Excellency's request and we are proud to have seen the Special Court develop into a fully fledged international court, with many of its practices recognized as an example of how international criminal justice could and should be administered and of how to engage the population and maximize the impact of its work on those who suffered so dreadfully during those terrible years of conflict.

My Government has never wavered in its support for the Special Court, as we believed and continue to believe that justice is necessary for Sierra Leone to address and overcome its past and again become one of the brightest jewels of West Africa. That support has been grounded on the equally strong belief that, in order to do its work, the Special Court must both be and be perceived as being independent, impartial and fair. I will not address the last two matters because they are for history and legal historians to judge, but I will say that, from our perspective, the independence of the Court has been a critical factor in its ability to do its work and to reach the people of Sierra Leone.

That has not come about by chance. From the very beginning, the people of Sierra Leone were at the forefront of those who called for the establishment of the Special Court. That is why the Special Court is based in Freetown, and that is why the Court was called upon to implement a robust outreach programme which has grown from strength to strength under the leadership of the Court's outreach coordinator. That is why, in answer to the calls from ordinary Sierra Leoneans, the Court has been looking at its legacy and at what added benefit it can bring beyond its judicial work.

The mere presence of the Special Court, with its mandate to identify those who bear the greatest responsibility for the crimes committed in Sierra Leone and to apply the rules to them equally, no matter who they are, has been a catalyst for the establishment of the rule of law in my country. But the Special Court has gone one step further, establishing a working group on legacy to strengthen its impact on the rule of law and to play an active role in promoting initiatives to reach the same goal. At the end of 2006, for example, as part of its legacy work, the Special Court was instrumental in the holding of a national consultative conference organized by the international non-governmental organization No Peace Without Justice and the Sierra Leone non-governmental organization Manifesto 99, with the active support and participation of the Government of Sierra Leone, on implementing legislation for the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. As a result of that Conference, draft legislation has now been prepared and we anticipate that it will become part of the laws of Sierra Leone early next year. That is a real and tangible example of the legacy of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which will serve the people and indeed the world for decades to come.

The Special Court began its work in mid-2002, just a few months after the last presidential and parliamentary elections in my country. We had just secured peace at that time and there were some who voiced concerns that the situation was not stable enough to support the work of the Court; others were concerned that the Special Court would undermine the peace process we had worked so hard to secure.

Neither fear came to pass. Now, in just a couple of months, we will again have general elections in my country, in an atmosphere of stable peace. As His Excellency President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah said earlier this year during his address to the nation on the occasion of the forty-sixth anniversary of the independence of our beloved country, Sierra Leone has come a long way and should be proud, and it has remained united in the face of adversity. We have remained united as a democracy, and the basic democratic principles by which we live our lives have been, to a very large extent, enhanced by the presence of the Special Court, as an independent institution seeking to administer the rule of law.

For all our strength and for all our determination that Sierra Leone should never fall back into those days of despair, we have not achieved our goal of sustainable peace on our own. I would be remiss were I not to highlight the critical role that the Special Court has played in helping us to maintain and strengthen peace in our country. Even before it came into existence, the very idea of the Special Court was an important factor in the cessation of hostilities. Indeed, the weapons-burning ceremony marking the end of the war took place only a few days after the signing of the Agreement on the establishment of the Special Court by the then Attorney General and Minister of Justice of Sierra Leone, who is now the Vice-President, Mr. Solomon Ekuma Berewa, and Mr. Hans Corell, who at the time was the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs. Never before has the link between peace and justice been so clear. Let it stand as a reminder and as an admonition to those who would seek to drive a wedge between the two.

The life of the Special Court has been characterized by milestones and challenges. Its latest milestone, just a few days ago, was the commencement of the trial of a former head of State — the first African

head of State to be brought to trial for serious violations of international humanitarian law — whose antics threatened not only his own country but also its neighbours, including Sierra Leone. But that milestone brings with it its own challenges, as the trial is taking place not in Freetown but in The Hague. It brings challenges of ensuring that the people of Sierra Leone have the access they have come to expect to trials being conducted on their behalf. It brings challenges of ensuring its ongoing independence and its perception of being independent, given that the trial is taking place on the premises of the International Criminal Court. It brings challenges of logistics and challenges of the law. We are confident that the Special Court will rise to those challenges, as it has risen to other challenges in the past. But the one challenge it has always faced, and one which it continues to face, is a challenge that the Special Court cannot overcome alone. The administration of justice does not have to be expensive; we hear too much about money. One of the distinguishing features of the Special Court has been its ability to do its work on a limited budget, a budget that has consistently been far lower than those of other international courts and tribunals. But we must all bear in mind also that the administration of justice is not free.

When my President called for justice, and when that call was answered by the international community, it raised the expectations of the people of my country. They expected, and continue to expect, fair justice, impartial justice and independent justice. They expect cases to be concluded, judgements to be issued and appeals to be heard and decided upon, so that we will finally have acknowledgement of the responsibility of those who planned and unleashed horrific crimes upon the people of Sierra Leone.

The promises made just seven years ago must be honoured. We call upon all present here, and upon the international community as a whole, to honour those promises. We — the Government, the people and the Special Court itself — have all played, and continue to play, our part to bring an end to impunity in Sierra Leone. The Council has also played its part.

The journey has been long, but it is not over yet. The international community, and in particular the States that make up the international community, must give the Special Court the financial stability it needs to see the trials through to the very end of the appeals process, to support the legacy work of the Court and to ensure its ability to engage the people of Sierra Leone, particularly now that an important part of its work is taking place so far away from home.

In conclusion, we are convinced that no one State or group of States can mobilize resources all by themselves. As part of the cooperative efforts, my delegation has taken the initiative to solicit financial support from African States and States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

That is the message from Sierra Leone.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Normandin (Canada): Canada is honoured to chair the Management Committee of the Special Court and pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the Security Council about the Court's work. It is a particular honour to do so during Belgium's presidency, as that country is well known for its commitment to international criminal justice.

Two years after the previous President of the Special Court appeared in this Chamber, it is fair to ask ourselves whether the Court is succeeding in fulfilling the mandate it has been given. First, as members of the Council have heard from the Court's President, Justice King, and its Prosecutor, Mr. Rapp, all the trials in Freetown will soon be coming to an end, with judgements in two of those trials to be handed down in the coming weeks. If there are appeals in the Freetown trials, they are expected to be completed by the end of next year. The Court's operations in Freetown and in The Hague should be winding up by late 2009.

Secondly, it may be instructive to hear what the people of Sierra Leone themselves have to say. In a recent survey of 10,000 Sierra Leoneans from across the country, 91 per cent said that they either agreed or strongly agreed that the Special Court had contributed to building peace in Sierra Leone, and 88 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that setting up the Court was the most appropriate option for addressing the crimes that were committed during the war. That is a significant vote of confidence in the Court — a Court that has been funded on voluntary contributions, that was literally built from the ground up only a few years ago, and that is operating in a country devastated by civil war.

Despite those enormous accomplishments, however, significant challenges remain. Financing has

been, and continues to be, the most critical issue facing the Court. Throughout its history, the Court has struggled because it has often been unsure from one month to the next whether there would be money in the bank. The resulting financial uncertainty has profoundly affected every aspect of the Court's operations. The Management Committee has taken steps to address this issue. Last month, a three-year completion budget was adopted that will take the Court to the end of its work, in late 2009. That gives the Court a clear financial plan that should allow it to effectively implement its completion strategy. But that will happen only if donors step forward with further contributions. More than 40 countries from around the world have contributed to the Court over the past years. We thank them, but we also urge those countries that can contribute more to do so.

The Court's challenges are not only financial. Let me briefly address three others: enforcement of sentences, witness protection and residual issues. So far, only three States have agreed to enforce the sentences of individuals who may be convicted and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. Only a few States have offered to assist certain vulnerable witnesses who must be resettled in third countries for their protection. Both of those needs are critical. States can make a significant non-cash contribution to the work of the Court by agreeing to enforce sentences or by accepting witnesses for resettlement.

In addition, winding up the Court's work will also raise a number of challenging issues. For example, archives must be made accessible to the public, but sensitive information, such as the names of protected witnesses, will need to be kept confidential. Sentences of imprisonment may need to be reviewed several years down the road, and protected witnesses may continue to need protection.

(*spoke in French*)

The Special Court will be the first tribunal of its kind to face these and other difficult issues associated with the completion of its work. So far, indeed, the Special Court has often been a pioneer. It was the first international criminal tribunal to be financed through voluntary contributions. It was the first tribunal in modern history to hold its deliberations in the very country where the crimes were alleged to have been committed. It was the first to establish an Office of the Principal Defender, and it will be the first to embark on the complicated exercise of running trials simultaneously on two continents, thousands of kilometres apart.

Many of us take pride in the Court's "firsts" and in its other accomplishments. But let me not leave the impression that it has been easy. Indeed, the Court is in dire need of financial resources. Furthermore, the personal and professional commitment demanded of, and given by, every single person working at the Court is enormous. And the stakes — for Sierra Leone, for the region and for international criminal justice — are high.

The Special Court is doing its part to contribute to the restoration of the rule of law and to the end of impunity in Sierra Leone. It is up to us to continue to do our part.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Hamburger (Netherlands): The Netherlands welcomes the briefings given today by the President and the Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone on its ongoing work, and we appreciate this opportunity to address the Council. We align ourselves fully with the statement to be delivered shortly by the representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union.

Today's debate on the Special Court is taking place at an important moment in the Special Court's history. This week saw the start of the trial of Charles Taylor, and judgements are expected in the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and Civil Defence Forces cases, later this month and in July, respectively.

The work of the Special Court has made a significant contribution to our common fight against impunity. The trial of Charles Taylor makes it clear that even heads of State do not and will not enjoy impunity and that they will be brought to account if they commit war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.

In our view, the work of the Court will — parallel with the work in the justice sector of, among others, the Peacebuilding Commission — contribute to long-term peace, security and development in Sierra Leone.

The Netherlands has been a committed supporter of the Special Court since its inception. It is a dedicated member of the Management Committee and one of its major donors, and intends to continue to

provide such support until the completion strategy has been realized.

The Netherlands has accepted the responsibility of being the host State for the trial of Charles Taylor. In addition to financial support, we have provided the Special Court with gratis personnel and security. For the trial of Charles Taylor, use is being made of International Criminal Court facilities. We note with satisfaction that the cooperation between the Special Court, the International Criminal Court and the host State is working very well.

As has already been said, the Court is well known for its excellent outreach programme. We commend the Court for its efforts to make the proceedings against Charles Taylor accessible for the people of Sierra Leone and West Africa more widely, and we will assist the Court in those endeavours wherever possible.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone has made substantial progress over the past year. It is essential that the completion strategy be adhered to. We therefore call on the Court to do everything in its power to ensure that that is the case.

Clearly, without adequate financial resources the Court cannot complete its important work. It is essential that the international community ensure that it can do just that. Like others, the Netherlands calls upon all countries present to ensure that there is sufficient funding for the Special Court.

Finally, it is indeed important to emphasize that the work of the Special Court will not end completely in 2009. Important residual functions will continue to exist well beyond that date. Also, the legacy of the institution needs to be assured for the public in general and the people of Sierra Leone, in particular.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Wali (Nigeria): I should like, on behalf of the Nigerian delegation, to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I should also like to express our appreciation to the delegation of the United States of America for the very effective way in which it conducted the affairs of the Council last month.

The timing of this debate could not have been more apt, given the recent commencement of the trial of Mr. Charles Taylor and the dire need to strengthen the capacity of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and to provide it with the resources that it needs to deal with the situation.

Nigeria continues to believe in the rule of law and in the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That is why we believe that the establishment of the Special Court for Sierra Leone will bring justice to the victims of human rights abuses. We are satisfied that the Court has sent a clear message that no one is above the law. Furthermore, it indicates the collective rejection of impunity by the international community.

Nigeria appreciates the important decisions so far reached by the Special Court. The Court has demonstrated that it is an important part of the peace process in Sierra Leone, that the political immunity of a head of State should not shield him or her from prosecution for human rights violations and crimes against humanity and that it is averse to the crime of the recruitment of child soldiers. The Court further declared forced marriage to be a crime against humanity and a violation of customary law, inter alia. We are happy to note that a judgement on heinous crimes committed in Sierra Leone will be delivered shortly.

Nigeria welcomes the efforts of States Members of the United Nations that are supporting the work of the Special Court through voluntary contributions. Equally, we encourage those that have not yet done so to get involved. The fact is that voluntary contributions have proved to be inadequate to meet the needs of the Court. Nigeria therefore calls on the international community to urgently explore other measures to enhance the funding of the Special Court. That would ensure reliable resource flows to deal with Court processes and other attendant requirements, such as victims' participation in Court proceedings, and would stem likely delays and suspensions of the activities of the Court.

That would further strengthen the position of the Court in effectively handling other issues that are bound to arise from the final judgements, such as monitoring detainees, the relocation and protection of prime witnesses and the enforcement of sentences.

We are of the view that the fight against impunity and against the tyranny perpetrated in Sierra Leone needs to be carried to its logical conclusion through the instrumentality of the Special Court. In order to

achieve that and to ensure that justice is not delayed, the international community must respond effectively to the all-encompassing funding requirements of the Court.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Matussek (Germany): I have the honour today to take the floor on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, I would like to thank President King and the Prosecutor, Mr. Rapp, for their presentations of the work of the Special Court — of its achievements and of the challenges that still lie ahead.

The European Union is strongly supportive of the work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is making an invaluable contribution to the restoration of peace and stability in Sierra Leone. Through the Court's work those most responsible for serious crimes during Sierra Leone's brutal civil war are being held accountable for their deeds. In this respect, the EU has noted with satisfaction that the most prominent case on the agenda of the Court — the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor — has commenced this very week in The Hague. Other cases are well under way in Freetown, and on the whole it seems that the goals of the completion strategy can be met.

The Court has also contributed significantly to the development of international criminal law. It has, for example, instituted landmark proceedings to investigate the use of child soldiers and forced marriage. It has also taken important decisions on criminal procedure. In addition, the Court has developed a whole body of rules and regulations on how to get the institution as such up and running. All of this deserves very careful study and analysis as we consider the further development of international criminal law. We call on the Court and all concerned to make every effort to preserve and render accessible this wealth of practical and legal experience.

The European Union has also noted with satisfaction that the new budget submitted by the Court covers the entire completion period, from 2007 to 2009. It is a clear indication of the determination of the Court to base its financial and administrative planning on the completion strategy. It sends a political message to the international community that the Court is indeed on track and has taken all necessary measures to achieve its goals within the established time frame. It makes equally clear, however, that for the Court to complete its work, ongoing support from Member States for the remaining years is needed. I should like to recall in this context that since the start of proceedings in 2002 European Union member States alone have provided more than 56 per cent of the Court's entire expenditures. In addition, several of the Court's projects were funded by the European Community. The European Union will not fail to continue its support of the Court's work.

Justice King's presentation, however, also contained a number of important messages that in the view of the European Union went far beyond the facts and figures. Let me point out just a few key features of the work of the Special Court which in our view offer important lessons of interest to the Security Council and the wider United Nations membership when we look at other situations.

Through its unprecedented and innovative outreach programme and its efforts to explain its work to the people concerned in Sierra Leone and beyond, the Court has almost become a household word, of which even schoolchildren have heard. This has greatly bolstered the acceptance of this body and its role in and for Sierra Leone. Current efforts to make the proceedings against Charles Taylor far away in The Hague as transparent as possible for the people of Sierra Leone will certainly add to this. It is essential that the people in the region be accurately informed about, and understand, the serious charges brought against him and the way in which the proceedings will be carried forward.

Another important feature in terms of ownership is that the Court has made great efforts to draw as many local staff as possible — including legal professionals in all spheres of criminal justice — into the work of the Court. Today, half of its staff are Sierra Leonean nationals. This again has helped to win the trust and confidence of the people in the region.

Both factors will in our view contribute to the development of the judicial institutions in Sierra Leone. We trust that the work of the Court will help to re-establish the rule of law for society at large well beyond the day on which the last trial is concluded.

Beyond the immediate local context, the Special Court has given a strong boost to what former Secretary-General Kofi Annan called the culture of the rule of law, for which the United Nations as a whole should stand. The work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone signals that in today's world serious crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes will no longer go unpunished. Not even the highest officials, including heads of State or Government, can count on impunity for their deeds. The international community will react — and, in keeping with the principles of the rule of law, will react through legal means: criminal proceedings that bring perpetrators to justice swiftly and effectively and strictly in accordance with all international standards. This Court proves that that is possible. It is possible because the people want it, and it is necessary because they deserve nothing less. This message will also give a strong boost to the growing international support for the International Criminal Court. It adds proof to our understanding that there is no dichotomy between peace on the one hand and justice on the other. Any society and, in particular, the victims who fall prey to ruthless oppressors have a right to claim both. The experience of the people of Sierra Leone shows that there is no rule that one has to be sacrificed in favour of the other.

"Completion" is a tempting term but, as we all know, in this context it is somewhat misleading. Even if all actual proceedings are completed and the cases tried, this is not the end of the story. The judgements will have to be enforced and those who have been convicted need to serve their sentences — and in that they have rights and in that they have status. The protection of witnesses may be needed for an extended period after a given trial is over. Long after the completion date new facts may become known which may necessitate certain decisions to be taken. And for all these and other purposes the Court's files have to be kept intact and accessible. In our national judicial systems, we can take it for granted that a court to decide on all of this is always there. Here it is not, and that is why the international community has to address what are commonly referred to as residual issues as a matter of urgency, just as in the cases of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The European Union trusts that work on these issues is now under way.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call now on Justice King to respond to comments made.

Justice King: At this stage, I want merely to say that we are very grateful to those present here this afternoon who have participated very seriously in this debate. As President of the Special Court, I am very encouraged by the participation and the contributions of the States whose representatives have attended this debate. I think the message is that there will be cooperation and that the Special Court will be able to complete its mandate. It has not been easy; yet I know that, with the cooperation of the international community, the Special Court will succeed in its experiment.

I want finally, Mr. President, to thank you, to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, and to thank all those representatives who have sacrificed their time to be here this afternoon and participate in this debate.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Justice King for his kind words.

I call now on Mr. Rapp to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mr. Rapp: I thank participants for their comments today and for their strong support of the mission of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. It is profoundly appreciated by those of us who are involved in this effort, and we look forward to, in some cases, visiting their capitals and discussing further the work of the Special Court.

There was, I recall, one question, from the representative of the Russian Federation. I think it is appropriate that I make a response. The question drew attention to the absence of Mr. Taylor from the opening of the trial, this Monday, 4 June.

I have been involved in this field for several years, previously at the Rwanda Tribunal. I will say that it is not uncommon for individuals who are accused to absent themselves from the proceedings. In a few cases, individuals have elected to absent themselves from entire trials. The practice of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and that of international tribunals — consistent with the practice in many

countries — is not to force such individuals to attend but to make certain, by seeking to communicate with the accused, that the decision to absent himself or herself from the proceeding is voluntary and that it is understood that, in the absence of the accused, the proceeding will nonetheless continue.

The arrangements for representation by defence counsel provide that defence counsel is assigned to represent individuals for whom the counsel appears. That assignment carries with it a solemn responsibility to continue in the proceeding and to represent the accused to the best of the counsel's ability, even if the counsel is not as fully instructed as the counsel might wish.

I should now like to refer to the events and the particular issues raised by Mr. Taylor and his counsel. They have previously raised issues regarding the need for additional time and resources, to which the Court and the Registry have responded in the past. The Court has twice provided additional time for defence preparation. The opening of the trial was delayed from April to June. Additionally, by a recent decision, well before 4 June, the judges of the Trial Chamber provided an extra three weeks to work with his counsel to prepare for the calling of the first witnesses.

There is, or course, the issue of the adequacy of the representation and investigative assistance available to Mr. Taylor. Those issues have been raised with the Registry on numerous occasions. It is to be noted here that — as I said in my remarks — the accused has claimed indigence, and therefore his legal services are being provided at the expense of the Court. The Registry has entered into a contract with his chief counsel that provides for substantial augmentation of the resources available, exceeding those of other accused before the Court. He has access to a counsel, a co-counsel and several legal assistants to investigators, both domestic and international — all paid for by the Court from its funds. There is an office in The Hague, an office in Freetown and, with the assistance of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, now an office in Monrovia. As the Registrar has commented, the legal services available here exceed, or at least equal, those provided at other tribunals.

I believe that there are now some practical issues that the judges and the Registry are working through, with regard to, perhaps, a new co-counsel coming into the case to replace one who is departing. We believe that those issues can be resolved in good faith and will be resolved.

I think that the whole issue of legal representation is very important as we look at the voluntary contributions and the base of the Court. Clearly, our Court's ability to provide legal assistance to indigent accused cannot be constrained by the absence of resources. It is critically important that the Court have the resources necessary to provide an effective defence for each of the accused individuals. That has been the situation since the time of the establishment of the Court, and it needs to be the situation until its very end. That is why we continue to urge Member States to support the Court and to provide the resources necessary not just for investigation and prosecution, but also for defence representation. At the end of the day, what is most important is not only that a trial be fair, but also that it be seen to be fair by the victims and the whole world community.

I thank the members of the Security Council, as well as the other representatives who have come forward to make their representations and submissions. We look forward to continuing our work at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, following up on the resolutions of the Council to establish justice and bring closure with regard to the grave crimes committed on the territory of Sierra Leone after November 1996.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Rapp for his responses to questions and for the clarifications he has provided.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5691

Security Council

Sixty-second year

Provisional

5691 st meeting

Monday, 11 June 2007, 6.10 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Verbeke	(Belgium)
Members:	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Biabaroh-Iboro
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Panama	Mr. De Vengoechea
	Peru	Mr. Ruiz Rosas
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Sulaiti
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Fifth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2007/262)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

07-37747 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 6.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Fifth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2007/262)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Lebanon, in which she requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Security Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004).

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Roed-Larsen to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2007/262, which contains the fifth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004).

Following consultations among the members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

(*spoke in English*)

"The Security Council recalls all its previous resolutions on Lebanon, in particular resolutions 1559 (2004), 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 520 (1982), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006), as well as the statements of its president on the situation in Lebanon, in particular the statements of 18 June 2000, 19 October 2004, 4 May 2005, 23 January 2006, 30 October 2006, 12 December 2006 and 17 April 2007.

"The Security Council welcomes the fifth semi-annual report to the Security Council of 7 May 2007 on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004).

"The Security Council reiterates its full support for the legitimate and democratically-elected Government of Lebanon, calls for full respect for the democratic institutions of the country, in conformity with its constitution, and condemns any effort to destabilize Lebanon. The Security Council calls upon all Lebanese political parties to show responsibility with a view to preventing, through dialogue, further deterioration of the situation in Lebanon. Recognizing the need to hold free and fair presidential elections in conformity with the Lebanese constitution and without any foreign interference and influence, the Security Council urges political parties in Lebanon to relaunch a national dialogue with the aim to reach an agreement to settle all political issues.

"The Security Council reaffirms its strong support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty, unity and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders and under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon.

"The Council condemns the ongoing criminal and terrorist acts in Lebanon, including those perpetrated by Fatah al-Islam, and fully supports the efforts carried out by the Lebanese Government and army to ensure security and stability throughout Lebanon. The Council underlines the need to protect and give assistance

to the civilian population, notably the Palestinian refugees. The Council reiterates that there should be no weapons in Lebanon without the consent of its Government and no authority other than that of its Government.

"The Security Council notes with appreciation that further progress has been made towards the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004), in particular through the extension of the authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout its territory, particularly in the South, but it also notes with regret that some provisions of resolution 1559 (2004) have yet to be fully implemented, particularly the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, the strict respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence of Lebanon, and free and fair presidential elections conducted according to the Lebanese constitutional rules, without any foreign interference and influence.

"The Security Council reiterates its deep concern at mounting information by Israel and other States of illegal movements of arms into Lebanon, and in particular across the Lebanese-Syrian border, and looks forward to the conclusions of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team. It reiterates its call for the strict respect for Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including its air space.

"The Security Council reiterates its call for the full implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) and urges all concerned States and parties, as mentioned in the report, to cooperate fully with the Government of Lebanon, the Security Council and the Secretary-General to achieve this goal.

"The Security Council reaffirms its support to the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy in their efforts and dedication to facilitate and assist in the implementation of all provisions of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006) and looks forward to the Secretary-General's next report on implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and to his further recommendations on the relevant outstanding issues."

(*spoke in French*)

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2007/17.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5692

Security Council

Distr.: General
12 June 2007

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 5692nd (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 12 June 2007, at 10 a.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

> "On 12 June 2007, the Security Council, pursuant to annex II, sections A and B of resolution 1353 (2001), held its 5692nd meeting in private with the troop-contributing countries to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force.
>
> "The Security Council and the troop-contributing countries heard a briefing under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure by Ms. Lisa Buttenheim, Director of the Asia and Middle East Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations."

07-37981 (E) 120607

United Nations S/PV.5693

Security Council

Sixty-second year

Provisional

5693rd meeting

Wednesday, 13 June 2007, 3.20 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Verbeke	(Belgium)
Members:	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Panama	Mr. Soler Torrijos
	Peru	Mr. Gallardo
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004) (S/2007/330)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

07-38126 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004) (S/2007/330)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Iraq in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency, Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Zebari (Iraq) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2007/330, containing the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004).

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, and by His Excellency Mr. Zalmay Khalilzad, Permanent Representative of the United States, on behalf of the Multinational Force.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq.

Mr. Qazi: The report (S/2007/330) before the Security Council illustrates the severity of the challenges facing Iraq and the efforts of the Government of Iraq, neighbouring countries and the wider international community to address them. The gravity of the situation is self-evident from the daily misery and suffering endured by the people of Iraq. Despite the notable and courageous efforts of the Iraqi and multinational security forces to stem the violence, progress has been slower and more uncertain than had been hoped for when the current set of security initiatives was launched, four months ago. Iraq is today faced with an exceptionally complex series of overlapping sectarian, political and ethnic conflicts that are beyond the capacity of any one actor or policy to resolve. That situation has contributed to a deepening sense of insecurity and pessimism among many. Today's revisiting of the 22 February 2006 tragedy of the Al-Askari shrine in Samarra only add to our concerns.

It has been nearly three years since I took up my assignment as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq. I have come to admire the wonderful resilience of the people of Iraq in adversity. But they are, after all, human, and they are entitled at last to see the light at the end of the long, dark tunnel in which they have been forced to live their lives for so long. But what do too many of them still see? They still see themselves and their children engulfed by every kind of violence. They see themselves without protection, and often without basic services. They see their leaders struggling to reach basic agreements on basic issues. They often see an endless blame game, instead of mutual accommodation and reconciliation. They see the world as just watching their tragedy or not doing as much as it should to alleviate it. But they do not give up hope, even when they see little reason to hope.

In his report, the Secretary-General has commented on the positive and serious efforts during the reporting period to activate the International Compact with Iraq, the establishment of working

groups with Iraq's neighbours in the field of security, energy supplies and displaced Iraqis and progress in reviewing the constitution and setting up a new electoral commission. Those are important and valuable developments. There are also political, security, economic and social benchmarks that the Iraqi Government is expected to implement. But to make a difference on the ground they will have to form part of, and contribute to, an effective political reconciliation process in Iraq. In addition, a concerted effort in support of reconciliation in Iraq by its neighbours and the international community will be required. The Council is uniquely placed to support such efforts.

The hope implicit in resolution 1546 (2004) that the achievement of specific political benchmarks within specific timelines would enable Iraq to make progress towards genuine national reconciliation has not yet been realized.

Contentious issues have been discussed in several forums, including the Political Committee for National Security, the Cabinet, the Council of Representatives, the constitutional review process, et cetera. However, the impact of bitter memories, fresh grievances, perceived discrimination, increasingly entrenched identity politics, mutual mistrust and, above all, the horrific and unending killings, has brought about an environment in which constructive and productive discussions leading to lasting reconciliation appear to be very difficult. Achieving benchmarks is not the same as reaching milestones on the path to reconciliation.

The international community cannot allow itself to become a spectator of the unfolding situation, if only because of the unconscionable human cost involved. The international community not only has a vital security stake in the stability of Iraq, it also has an inescapable moral obligation to encourage and enable the Government of Iraq in building inclusive and cumulative processes that can bring stability. While the Government of Iraq is the first to acknowledge that primary responsibility for rescuing the country falls upon itself, it is also the case that the magnitude and number of challenges confronting the Government entitles it to call upon the international community for necessary assistance. The International Compact with Iraq and structures established by the regional meetings provide a potentially solid framework for vital cooperation.

Iraq's leaders support a fair distribution of power, equitable sharing of national resources and wealth, democracy and the rule of law, et cetera. However, in practice it is often difficult to strike a mutually acceptable balance between competing claims on basic issues. That balance can only be struck if democratic politics is seen as more than just a competition between majority and minority rights and more than a power struggle between political communities. That is especially the case in countries like Iraq, which are undergoing a comprehensive transition process that involves nation-rebuilding.

In such situations, fundamental questions relating to the future of the country have to be answered by more than rhetoric and general statements of principle. Answers need to be given in the shape of agreed and specific policy measures that, by effectively addressing the priorities of the people of Iraq, progressively transform despair into hope. If the levels of despair and hope among the Iraqi people have worsened or remain essentially unaltered, it is time for the leaders of Iraq, the international community and the United Nations to consider how to enable Iraq to move forward on a more assured basis.

The constitutional review process is itself a result of the assessment by Iraq's political leadership that further reflection on key constitutional issues is required. The United Nations has been privileged to assist with a range of technical advice that has laid out options for tackling most of the contentious issues. But the key decisions remain political. For those decisions to serve the national interests of Iraq, they need to be made by democratically elected Iraqi representatives and leaders in a way that strengthens a sense of popular participation and national unity.

Fortunately, the choices before the Iraqi people are not black and white; nor are they zero-sum. There is a whole range of grey areas of compromise which can accommodate the essential concerns of all participants in the political process. Those choices often need to be spelled out with professional expertise in a clear and concise manner; our constitutional support team has been doing just that. This kind of assistance can be extended to other areas where mutual understanding, accommodation and compromise are essential to progress. The political leaders can be persuaded that they are not always faced with zero-sum choices on basic issues. Once that is appreciated, the constitutional review process and several other

processes — such as the legislative programme, provincial elections, peacefully negotiating the implementation of constitutional provisions, a fair sharing of oil revenues, depoliticizing ministerial appointments and recruitment to security forces, transitional justice, strengthening human rights and humanitarian protection systems, et cetera — can be extremely effective vehicles for reconciliation while simultaneously closing off space for the perpetrators of violence and political extremism.

Few Iraqi families have been spared the direct and indirect consequences of violence and human rights violations. It is natural that many of them have a deep sense of victimization. Justice, which is another essential pillar for reconciliation, requires that actual victims are assisted and compensated for their loss. These may be individuals detained without charge, involuntarily displaced persons inside or outside the country, families that have lost their main source of income through violence or discrimination, et cetera.

A variety of initiatives are now under way to alleviate the plight of externally displaced persons, by the Government of Iraq, host Governments — especially Syria and Jordan — and the international community through the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other relief agencies. However, a much broader internal initiative supported by the international community will be needed to address the plight of internally displaced persons and of the Iraqis in general. The people of Iraq need to see tangible, sustained and effective measures to improve the conditions of their daily lives and to build their confidence in the political process and their own future.

The Secretary-General's latest report once again expresses serious concern about the human rights situation in Iraq. It is clear that all of the institutions of law and order in Iraq face severe challenges. Even so, as State institutions bound by the norms of international human rights law, they are held to standards set by those norms, especially with regard to the protection of non-derogable rights. Criminals and extremists of all stripes who use violence and vengeance against innocent civilians for their aims have already displayed their callous contempt for all norms of civilized behaviour. The Government of Iraq has a particular responsibility to bring to justice the perpetrators of such acts while strengthening the institutions that promote the rule of law, particularly the security forces and the judiciary.

Accordingly, I urge the Government of Iraq and others who are undoubtedly committed to humanitarian and human rights protection, to work closely with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on how to best achieve that goal with a view to realizing an early improvement in the human rights situation. That effort would also immensely strengthen the political reconciliation process.

In conclusion, there is an urgency about the situation in Iraq that the international community needs to take note of and respond to. If the political and security situation in Iraq is not improved over the coming months, there is a danger that its several crises may escalate even further. The United Nations, with the support of the Security Council and the Government of Iraq, has the potential to effectively assist and develop national dialogue and reconciliation processes, regional cooperation on Iraq, and international support. In reviewing the UNAMI mandate, the Council may wish to consider how best to harness that potential in the service of the Iraqi Government and people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Representative Qazi for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Zalmay Khalilzad, Permanent Representative of the United States.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): I am pleased to report to the Security Council on behalf of the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I). I warmly welcome Iraq's Foreign Minister, Mr. Zebari, and am pleased that he could be here with us today. I also want to thank Special Representative Ashraf Qazi for his work and for his report on the important efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

It is clear that the Iraqi Government confronts significant security challenges as it strives to promote stability and consolidate Iraq's young democracy. Success will depend not only on progress in the security sector, where MNF-I plays an important supporting role, but also on advances in the economic field and, most important, movement in the political arena. We welcome the efforts expended over the last

three months, while noting that much work remains to be done.

With your permission, Mr. President, I will now provide an update on those efforts, which include activities in Iraq's political, economic and security sectors, as well as in the region and with the international community.

In the political arena, progress on national reconciliation is essential to ensure that security efforts under way will result in long-term stability in the country and in the region. To that end, we welcome efforts by Iraqi leaders who are engaged in activities designed to promote national reconciliation. For example, as Mr. Qazi mentioned, the Constitutional Review Committee continues its work to address outstanding constitutional matters. Last month, the Committee announced that it had prepared a draft plan to reform the constitution. The Committee's work will provide a solid foundation for a successful Iraq, and we look forward to its sustained effort on this fundamental matter.

We also welcome the selection of the new Commissioners for the Independent High Electoral Commission and the work under way to prepare for provincial elections. Additional legislation is being formulated that will outline the powers of provincial councils and their relationship to national Government institutions. We welcome those efforts, as well as the work of the newly created Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration Committee, dealing with militias and other unauthorized military formations, and we look forward to the achievement of other benchmarks on reconciliation, such as the passage of a law to reform the de-Baathification process.

I now turn to the economic front. We welcome the launch of the International Compact with Iraq, on 3 May, and appreciate the support of Secretary-General Ban. The emphasis now is on implementing the economic initiatives that the Government of Iraq has committed to undertake. The support of the international community for Iraq will be important for the Compact's success. The cooperation between Iraq and the United Nations has been key to the successful launch of that initiative and will remain critical during the implementation phase. Further advances in Iraq's economic reform, however, will require the passage of legislation on the hydrocarbons sector with regulations governing oil revenue-sharing. Iraq must also press ahead with its efforts to improve budget execution, particularly for reconstruction projects initiated by key ministries and the provincial governments and for essential support in service delivery.

On the security front, insurgents, militias, terrorists and criminals continue their destabilizing actions. We strongly condemn this morning's vicious attack on the holy shrines of Imam Ali al-Hadi and Imam Hassan al-Askari in Samarra, and we share the outrage of the Iraqi people at that crime. It is another deliberate attempt by terrorists to sow dissent and inflame sectarian strife among the people of Iraq. We call on all Iraqis to reject that provocation.

Most of the attacks in Iraq have occurred in Baghdad, Anbar, Salah al Din and Diyala provinces, and the majority of the victims are Iraqi civilians. We regret the suffering of the Iraqi people and the many innocent lives lost. Those seeking to undermine Iraq continue to use a variety of methods to kill and maim, as witnessed by the use of lethal vehicle-borne improvised explosive bombings in the Baghdad area in April. Also in April, a suicide bomber blew himself up in the building housing the Iraqi Council of Representatives, killing one Council member and wounding several other people. In a demonstration of resolve to stand up to terrorists, the Council met the following day. We applaud that courageous act and commitment to serving the interests of the Iraqi people.

Operation Fardh al-Qanun — "imposing the law" — continues to work to improve security in the Baghdad area in order to provide the time and space for political and economic progress. The Operation is entering its fifth month, and although it is still too early to project results, there have been signs of a significant shift in the distribution of the violence. While high-profile terrorist attacks and attacks against coalition forces are still frequent, sectarian murders and attacks against civilians in Baghdad have decreased from the levels seen in January. We are also seeing significant increases in the number of weapons caches found. Iraqi and multinational forces continue to establish joint security stations and combat outposts in the city and in surrounding areas. The performance of the Iraqi Security Forces is critical to the success of those efforts.

There are other developments in Iraq's stand against the insurgency. Opposition to Al-Qaida in

Anbar province is growing, aided by combined operations in Ramadi with Iraqi security and multinational forces that include the establishment of Iraqi police stations and joint security stations throughout the city. Iraqi security forces are recruiting in greater numbers in Anbar province, demonstrating the determination of the people to participate in the fight against insurgents and Al-Qaida and to assist with the security of the country. We see considerable interest and activity in other provinces with regard to extending the success of the popular resistance to Al-Qaida that has been demonstrated in Anbar province.

Iraqi security forces are undertaking a greater role in Iraq's security, taking the lead in raids and other operations to combat insurgents, militias, terrorists and criminals. In the month of May, the Iraqi Special Operations Forces Brigade alone conducted more than 48 operations targeting terrorists, regardless of their sect. Iraqi forces continue to conduct operations throughout the country.

As part of the continuing process of handing over the security lead to Iraqi security forces, multinational forces transferred security responsibility for the southern Iraq province of Maysan in April and for the northern provinces of Sulaimaniya, Erbil and Dohuk on 30 May. Iraqi security forces have now assumed the security lead in seven provinces. We are working steadily to achieve further transfers as the Iraqi security forces and Iraqi provincial governments build their capacity to take on that responsibility.

On 4 May, the Egyptian Government hosted an expanded neighbours' meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh to facilitate greater regional dialogue and support for Iraqi efforts to rebuild the country. Follow-up, particularly by the working groups established in Sharm, is needed to continue the momentum begun by that initiative. Iraqi leaders also continue their bilateral outreach to strengthen relations with Iraq's neighbours, and we encourage all parties to expand those efforts. We welcome Turkey's offer to host the next expanded neighbours' meeting later this year.

Securing Iraq's borders is vital. Iraq is not able to accomplish that task on its own; it requires the goodwill and efforts of Iraq's neighbours as well. Not all of Iraq's neighbours have been helpful. We remain concerned that certain countries continue to support violent extremists who seek to undermine Iraq's political progress. The flow of foreign terrorists and weapons into Iraq is particularly destabilizing. We call upon all Member States to repudiate that behaviour and to endorse Prime Minister Al-Maliki's repeated requests for an end to foreign interference in Iraq's political process.

We laud the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), which remains firm in its ongoing commitment to help the Iraqi people despite the difficult security environment. The specialized assistance of the United Nations will be critical to Iraq's long-term development and stability. We look forward to the upcoming discussions on how to revise UNAMI's mandate so as to encourage a robust presence to assist Iraq's political and economic progress and to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced people.

We welcome the contributions made in support of United Nations security efforts in Iraq. Georgia, South Korea and Romania have provided security forces for UNAMI that have been essential to the United Nations operations in Iraq. Fiji continues to provide United Nations guard protection. Sustained international support in Iraq — including through contributions to the fund for security expenses, as well as the provision of forces for United Nations security — will enable the United Nations to remain focused on its core assistance objectives in Iraq. MNF-I is ready to assist with United Nations security as necessary.

We extend our sincere appreciation to Special Representative Qazi for his efforts over the past three years to assist the Iraqi Government and people in their rebuilding efforts. Special Representative Qazi has worked closely with the Government of Iraq, the Iraqi people, the multinational forces and regional governments in support of Iraq, and we thank him for his dedication and service.

In closing, let me confirm that the multinational forces remain dedicated to helping the Iraqi security forces build their capabilities so that they may assume full responsibility for securing and defending their country. The international community shares a common interest in ensuring the success of the Iraqi efforts to create a peaceful, stable and prosperous country, which is important not only for the people of Iraq, but also for the region and the entire world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ambassador Khalilzad for his briefing.

I now invite His Excellency Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, to make a statement.

Mr. Zebari (Iraq): In accordance with Security Council resolution 1723 (2006), the mandate for the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I) is due for review. On behalf of the Government of Iraq, I would like to present an update to the Security Council on the present situation and ongoing developments in our country.

In May this year, Iraq observed the first anniversary of the formation of the constitutionally elected Government that is accountable to the 275 men and women of the Council of Representatives, the first democratically elected legislative body in Iraq's history. The formation of the National Unity Government that is broadly representative of, and governs by the consent of, Iraq's diverse society, marked the completion of the political process as set forth in Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) and consolidated Iraq's commitment to the process of democratization.

The past 12 months have been a critical test of the courage and commitment of the Government and the people of Iraq as we broker a difficult, and often painful, transition towards a stable and peaceful democracy. Despite remarkable progress, a complex political, security and economic environment continues to present formidable challenges to the elected leaders tasked with the normalization of our country.

There is no more definitive example of this threat than today's bombings, which destroyed the remnant of the holy Al-Askaria shrine in Samarra. This shrine, sacred to both Shia and Sunni and revered by all Iraqis regardless of religion, was of no military value whatsoever. Its destruction in today's attack — the second on that shrine in 16 months — was meant symbolically as a message from the terrorists that they are seeking to destroy the fabric of Iraqi society — to destroy inter-religious harmony as well as to destroy the tradition of tolerance and fraternity within each of Iraq's various religious traditions. We Iraqis, standing united as a Government and as a people, utterly reject these obvious attempts to divide us in the hope of sowing the seeds of sectarian and civil war.

Notwithstanding this senseless violence, my Government has made tremendous strides towards the day when security will be provided by a self-sufficient Iraqi national security force. That is our ultimate objective, and it is what we are actively engaged in achieving. While Iraqis will always be grateful for their liberation from an absolute despot, no Iraqi Government official — indeed, no Iraqi citizen — wants the presence of foreign troops on Iraqi soil one day longer than is vitally necessary. But today, and for the foreseeable future at least, the presence of MNF-I troops is vitally necessary, not only for Iraq but also to safeguard regional security and stability.

The situation in our country is difficult and challenging at the moment. While we are eagerly strengthening our nascent democracy and rebuilding our State institutions, the Iraqi people continue to be targeted by a well funded and organized campaign to destroy democracy in our part of the world. As Iraqis have increasingly demonstrated their determination to go forward in rebuilding their country, this campaign has become increasingly vicious. Aside from today's heinous attack, in recent weeks, for example, terrorists have destroyed bridges, seeking to sever the physical ties that link Iraqis together. Although many of the perpetrators of violence are indiscriminate in terms of their victims, their continued wilful targeting of political, civil, educational, economic and, as we saw today, religious institutions is no less than an attack on the modern and historic culture of Iraq.

While the scale of their atrocities is appalling and captures media attention, the ability of these terrorists to influence actual events on the ground is limited. For instance, they continue to target police and army recruits, as is often reported in the media; yet, the numbers of recruits continue to rise through a growing stream of volunteers. Thus, the terrorists have failed to achieve their strategic goal of preventing large numbers of volunteers in the rebuilding of the country.

We have succeeded in recruiting nearly 350,000 men into the armed and security services in Iraq. We are making progress in training and equipping those troops, looking forward to the day when they will be able to secure the peace of the nation without the presence of foreign troops. Yet, this process takes time. It takes time for an esprit de corps to develop, and it takes time for trust and confidence to be built, up and down the ranks. We are building these institutions, doing so under far less than ideal circumstances.

Thus, the role of the Multinational Force continues to be vitally important, in at least two ways.

First, the Multinational Force provides additional strength of arms whenever the need exceeds the capacity of Iraq's armed and security forces. An example of this phenomenon can now be seen in Operation Fardh al-Qanun, or Baghdad security plan, which aims to re-establish the rule of law in Baghdad and to stabilize the rest of the country. This is a difficult and dangerous task, made all the more difficult by the ruthlessness of an enemy unbound by any moral or ethical restrictions. Carrying out this task also has a heavy price, for both Iraqi and multinational forces. Secondly, the Multinational Force is undertaking the training of the Iraqi Armed Forces. Let me say here that the Iraqi people are deeply grateful for their continued efforts and their sacrifice.

The Iraqi Government is responsible for security and for increasing the capacity and capabilities of security forces, including recruitment, training and equipment, as outlined in the letter from Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to the Security Council dated 11 November 2006 (S/2006/888, annex). We recognize the need to accelerate the build-up of an Iraqi force that is self-sustaining, holds public confidence and is loyal to an Iraqi national agenda. The Government of Iraq is the sole authority to control Iraqi streets, and we are strengthening our stance against all illegal militias and corruption within our national security, army and police.

Iraqi security forces continue to assume greater responsibility for providing security to the people, as their size, experience and capacity increase. In September of last year, the Iraqi Government assumed operational command and control of ground, naval and air force commands. Today, security responsibility for seven governorates has been transferred to the Iraqi authorities, and my Government aspires to increase the number of provinces and governorates under its control with a view towards the day when it has full authority over all 18 governorates.

We look forward to the day when Iraqi forces are able to assume full responsibility for the maintenance of security and stability in Iraq, thus allowing the Multinational Force to complete its mandate and end its presence in the country. Until that day, Iraq continues to need the support of the Multinational Force to assist it in providing a secure environment for the Iraqi people.

Iraq's armed forces, in conjunction with the Multinational Force, are making encouraging progress in their drive to restore law and order to the capital. The number of sectarian-motivated murders — a phenomenon new to Iraq — has greatly reduced since last winter, before operations began.

Preliminary reports indicate that some of those who had been internally displaced from their homes in Baghdad are beginning slowly to return. The worrisome occurrence of militias attempting to ethnically cleanse neighbourhoods within the capital is beginning to be reversed. Apart from the statistics, we see evidence of normalization — businesses reopening, increased traffic and more everyday signs of life on the streets. While it is perhaps too early to declare success, those are not small developments. It is of vital importance that those operations continue as we look forward to the day when normalcy can be restored to the capital, home to one-quarter of Iraq's population.

Of course, it is essential that we ensure that those who have so terrorized Baghdad's population should not find refuge in the surrounding areas. In this respect, too, there is progress to report. Tribal chiefs and ordinary citizens in Anbar and Diyala provinces — the most restive of Iraq's provinces and, for too long, a haven for Al-Qaida terrorists — have shown signs of taking arms and standing up against those terrorists. These citizens are now cooperating closely with the Iraqi forces and the multinational forces.

While we are determined to defeat the forces of those whose only agenda is to destroy the political process in Iraq, my Government is mindful that strategies in addition to the military option must be employed to restore peace and stability.

National reconciliation is also a top priority with which we are contending. As a cornerstone of this reconciliation process, we are working on a draft law to reverse overly aggressive de-Baathification. Past practices, commencing in 2003, failed to differentiate between criminals and non-criminals, and failed to distinguish between those who were ideological members of the party versus those who had joined it simply to be able to support their families — a common practice in autocratic and authoritarian regimes. Those failures will be remedied through legislation.

In addition, and as part of national dialogue and reconciliation, we are now in the process of reviewing

and revising the constitution, with an eye to completing that process this month. Simultaneously, we are working on completing a hydrocarbon law and a law on the distribution of Iraq's assets in a way that fairly insures development throughout the country.

Many have criticized us for taking time to complete what would be, even in a developed democracy operating under ideal circumstances, an ambitious legislative agenda. This process has taken time for two reasons. First, we are convinced that setting these laws on a firm foundation is more important than adhering to some artificial deadline. Secondly, we are not operating exclusively on the principle of majority rule. We do not wish to establish these fundamental and long-serving State institutions on the principle of "50 per cent plus one". We are trying to reach as comprehensive a national consensus as possible so that all groups willing to participate in the political process will feel invested in these institutions.

I would also like to report on our Government's activities in the regional and international arenas, activities which have been quite successful. Conscious of the important role our neighbours can play in helping us stabilize our country, we have worked proactively to bring their representatives together with other important players in the region. Thus, on 10 March, we held in Baghdad an expanded meeting of senior experts representing our neighbours, the permanent members of the Security Council and key international and regional organizations, including, of course, the United Nations. That meeting prepared the ground for the expanded international ministerial conference of Iraq's neighbouring countries, plus Egypt and Bahrain, as well as the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and of the Group of Eight, on 4 May in Sharm el-Sheikh. At that meeting ministers enacted the concrete recommendation made by their experts earlier in Baghdad.

As a consequence, three technical committees have been set up dealing with problems besetting Iraq and affecting our neighbours, namely, security, temporarily displaced persons and energy supplies. Meetings of these technical committees are being prepared, and we have asked the United Nations to assist in their work.

Also, on 3 May, the International Compact with Iraq was launched in the Egyptian city of Sharm el-Sheikh. The launch was attended by over 60 countries and international organizations, and many were represented at the ministerial level. The Compact is a framework developed to help the Iraqi Government achieve its national vision of a unified, democratic, federal, peaceful and prosperous Iraq through a programme of mutual commitments — time-bound commitments by the Iraqi Government to achieve key milestones in security and political and governmental reform and economic reconstruction, and commitments by the international community to provide necessary assistance in the medium term.

In respect to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), we note that its mandate was set by resolution 1546 (2004) and focused on discrete activities centred around Iraq's political process. This process has been essentially completed. UNAMI rules going forward must evolve better to fit current and future needs, as exemplified by the implementation of the International Compact. We are mindful, however, that circumstances are sufficiently changed, and the relationship between UNAMI and the Government of Iraq must change to reflect that reality.

Our vision of UNAMI is one in which its rule must be responsive to Iraq's needs as expressed by the Government of Iraq. We also expect UNAMI to expand its role to include a greater presence and to facilitate expanding the work of United Nations agencies, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization and other such agencies.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Mr. Ashraf Qazi for his years of dedicated service to Iraq and to the United Nations. During his tenure in Baghdad, he earned the respect of Iraq's political class and the gratitude of the people of Iraq. He will be missed, but we wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Let me conclude by formally noting my Government's request for the continuation of the arrangements relating to the Development Fund for Iraq and the International Advisory and Monitoring Board for Iraq, for reasons contained in my letter to the President of the Security Council dated 8 June 2007.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): My delegation recognizes the presence here of His Excellency Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq. We thank the Secretary-General for his report, and we also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, for his briefing.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report, the ongoing political, sectarian and crime-related problems in Iraq should engage the continued attention of the international community. We therefore endorse his call for strong political support for the people and the Government of Iraq as they strive to achieve peace and security. That is why my delegation welcomes this debate, which demonstrates our collective solidarity with the people of Iraq, especially women and children as well as refugees and displaced persons, who are bearing the brunt of this conflict.

My delegation is encouraged by the approval by the Council of Representatives of the candidatures of nine commissioners to serve on the permanent Independent High Electoral Commission, in accordance with the Commission's law promulgated in January 2007, as well as by the selection by the new Board of Commissioners of new officers, including the Chairman, Chief Electoral Officer and Rapporteur. These incremental steps are essential in building the vital institutions necessary to ensure good governance and respect of the political and constitutional reconstruction endeavours in Iraq.

The assistance provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in this regard, coupled with other technical support given by UNAMI towards the constitutional reconstruction process in Iraq, is highly commendable.

The conference on the Iraq Compact, together with the expanded ministerial conference of the neighbouring countries of Iraq which followed it, demonstrate the increasing role Iraq's neighbours wish to play in bringing the crisis to an end. It is hoped that the commitment made at these meetings will be followed through and go to reinforce the resources already being provided by the donor countries, which contribute to the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq with a view to ensuring the sustainable reconstruction of Iraq. It is our hope that the momentum generated by the conference on the Compact for Iraq will be maintained in order to yield the peace dividend and make a positive impact on Iraq.

We commend the various humanitarian interventions undertaken by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to provide emergency relief to Iraqi families in dire need of water, food and medicine. We welcome the idea of opening an Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) office in Iraq in order to reinforce and ensure the effective coordination of the humanitarian work of the United Nations in Iraq.

Given the experience of the United Nations in Iraq and the concerns expressed, the Secretary-General supports the mitigating measures aimed at enhancing the safety and security of UNAMI personnel, including the fact that the reinforcement of the overhead security cover for UNAMI in the International Zone in Baghdad should be sustained. The Secretary-General's proposal to make arrangements for the construction of a new United Nations building in Baghdad which would be designed to withstand the prevailing security challenges in Iraq requires special attention. These measures will not only answer the safety needs of United Nations staff, but, equally important, they will facilitate the multifaceted task of the United Nations and UNAMI of reaching out to all segments of the population who are in need of assistance every day.

The report on the human rights situation in Iraq is disturbing. My delegation therefore endorses the outcome of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) conference held in Geneva in April 2007 and calls on the Iraqi Government and all relevant parties to choose the path of national reconciliation and to adhere to the principles of human rights and international law.

We call also on those responsible to release the Iraqi United Nations employees and others who have been kidnapped or gone missing during this reporting period. My delegation also welcomes the decision of the Government of Iraq to grant UNAMI access to Iraqi detention centres and welcomes UNAMI's intention to carry out the first of such visits later this month.

We are not sure of the reasons for the Iraqi Government's inability to ratify the status-of-mission agreement signed with the United Nations in June 2005. We have, however, urged the competent authorities in Iraq to proceed with the necessary

ratification procedures to ensure that UNAMI's presence in Iraq is put on a firmer legal footing.

Finally, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Deputy Representation for Iraq, Mr. Jean-Marie Fakhouri, who is leaving the United Nations Mission in Iraq at the end of this month, for his invaluable services.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like at the outset to welcome the presence in the Council of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Hoshyar Zebari. I would like also to thank Mr. Ashraf Qazi as well as Ambassador Khalilzad for their respective briefings.

For my part, I will make the following comments.

My first comment concerns the situation on the ground, which is clearly of concern. It is of concern first of all in terms of security, even though it is still probably too early to assess the new measures taken, in particular the plan put in place in Baghdad. The picture remains a gloomy one. Iraq is the scene of too many attacks. Today's fresh attack against the Shi'ite mosque in Samarra is proof of this. France vigorously condemns that attacks and calls on all parties to exercise utmost restraint.

The people of Iraq continue to pay a very high price. Hundreds, probably thousands, of innocent people have been killed in the past few weeks. The Green Zone itself is now hit on a regular basis, even the Parliament, which was the target of a suicide attack. In addition, the militias — whose deadly activities we had hoped would decrease — have, according to the Secretary-General, resumed their assassinations and kidnappings.

The situation on the ground is of concern also in humanitarian terms. The Secretary-General confirms that Iraq is experiencing a major crisis, stating that the situation is continuing to deteriorate. Between 30,000 and 50,000 Iraqis are leaving the country each month, in addition to the 4 million Iraqis who are internally displaced or refugees within or outside the country.

Above and beyond this, it is urgent now more than ever to work collectively to seek solutions. Along those lines, a number of developments should be noted.

First of all, at the internal level, the Secretary-General has noted some progress, and we hope that it will continue and enable the political process to proceed. I would also note the Iraqi Government's adoption of a draft hydrocarbon law which will now be debated and approved by the Parliament. It is a draft that, we know, deals with the key question of how to distribute Iraq's wealth.

I would also note the upcoming conclusions of the work of the Constitutional Review Committee, which has been done in cooperation with United Nations teams and whose vital importance is clear to all.

At the regional level, some developments have taken place such as the Sharm el-Sheikh meeting, which brought together a number of neighbouring countries on the basis of important principles such as the stability and unity of Iraq and refusal to interfere in its internal affairs, and made it possible also to lay the foundation for strengthened regional cooperation in the areas of security, energy and refugees.

Finally, there have been some international developments: the holding of the conference organized by the High Commissioner for Refugees on the question of displaced persons — now a priority issue for the United Nations — and the launching of the International Compact with Iraq.

It is now necessary to build on this beginning momentum. Of course, the solution rests with Iraq and with a true process of national reconciliation, one that is as inclusive as possible and that will isolate those forces that want to see Iraq fail. That requires all Iraqi officials to come to an agreement on key issues, first of all on the equitable sharing of power and of resources, which must be the subject of a broad consensus.

The countries of the region, which have no interest in seeing chaos prevail in Iraq, will themselves need to play their full role. All efforts that would allow them to contribute to the stabilization of Iraq should be encouraged. In that respect, it is important that the working groups on the questions of security, energy and humanitarian issues, whose establishment was decided at Sharm el-Sheikh on 4 May, develop specific proposals for cooperation. France, of course, fully agrees with the call of the Secretary-General to maintain the momentum established at Sharm el-Sheikh.

Finally, the international community must remain mobilized to maintain this international and regional momentum. That is why the Secretary-General went to

Baghdad, thereby sending a strong message. It is the reason for the International Compact with Iraq, which is an ambitious project that can function only if there is respect for reciprocal commitments without losing sight of the political dimension of the problem.

That is the goal of the commitment of United Nations, which continues to play a major role in stabilizing Iraq under very difficult conditions and which could, as the Secretary-General has suggested, perhaps play a broader role — provided, of course, that security requirements are fully respected. It is also the objective of the Multinational Force in Iraq, whose mandate, pursuant to resolution 1723 (2006), will draw to a close once the Iraqi forces are fully responsible for maintaining security and stability in the country.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First, I would like to thank Mr. Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for having presented the report (S/2007/330) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Iraq and the work of United Nations agencies there. We take note of Mr. Khalilzad's briefing on the Multinational Force, the Development Fund for Iraq and the International Advisory and Monitoring Board.

We are grateful for the statement made by Mr. Zebari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, who informed us about the Government's stepped up efforts to stabilize the situation in the country. We agree with the conclusions and assessments of the Secretary-General's report; we would like to make a few comments in that regard.

We believe that, as confirmed at the Sharm el-Sheikh meeting in May, the international community, through its collective efforts, is trying to help to achieve the prompt and sustainable normalization of the situation in Iraq. We are convinced that, without effective international assistance for the political process, the leaders of the various groups in Iraq will not be able to overcome the inertia resulting from mutual distrust. Given that situation, if national agreement is to be achieved, we need the mediation of the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement, Iraq's neighbours and other countries that have an opportunity to help Baghdad.

It is important that the final statement of the Sharm el-Sheikh meeting accorded priority to goals and tasks aimed at achieving a settlement and stressed the need for inter-Iraqi conciliation and broad exchanges of ideas among various communities and groups.

We are very concerned about the information concerning the renewed terrorist act in Samarra, which caused further destruction of holy sites that had already been damaged in the bombing of February 2006. We express sympathy to the faithful who were outraged by that heinous extremist act. At the same time, we call on all Iraqis and Iraqi communities to remain calm and not to succumb to the outrage of radicalism. We hope that the provocative act in Samarra will not — as in 2006 — lead to a new round of cruel inter-ethnic fighting. We support the efforts of the Al-Maliki Government, which are aimed at preventing renewed spiral of crisis in the country.

Here, I would like to stress that the key to success for a genuine national dialogue in Iraq is that all religious, ethnic and political groups should feel included in the political process and that they have a democratic opportunity to find their place within the Iraqi power structure. That must be ensured if we want Iraq to remain one undivided sovereign State. We also need to provide deadlines by which the Multinational Force — which, we must say, is a serious irritant for many Iraqis — will leave the country. We are not speaking of the immediate announcement of a date. But it appears to be important for Iraqis to see the prospect of a full end to the foreign military presence in their country.

We note that one of the major results of the Sharm el-Sheikh meeting was the adoption of a Russian initiative to establish a standing body to coordinate the efforts of interested parties on Iraq. We are awaiting information on the start of the work of that and other key working groups, and on their decisions. Once again, we would like to say that, for our part, we are ready to actively participate in developing and implementing any initiatives that might assist in overcoming the crisis in Iraq.

We express support for the draft statement drawn up by the United States with respect to today's meeting.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): Let me first join my colleagues in welcoming the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, His Excellency Hoshyar Zebari. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of

the Secretary-General, Ambassador Qazi, and the Permanent Representative of the United States, Ambassador Khalilzad, for their informative and very interesting briefings today.

Italy believes that a stable, peaceful and prosperous Iraq is a key element of global and regional stability and, at the same time, a moral responsibility for the international community. For that reason, Italy has always been at the forefront in assisting Iraq in its efforts towards peace, stability and prosperity.

Since 2003, Italy has contributed over €270 million to international efforts in the civilian area, and last January it signed a bilateral agreement providing soft loans for up to €400 million. Italy also cancelled €2.4 billion of Iraqi debt and, with the Iraqi Government, is co-chairing the International Reconstruction Facility Fund for Iraq.

Accordingly, the Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Massimo D'Alema, took part in the launch of the International Compact and in the Expanded Ministerial Conference of Neighbouring Countries of Iraq, which took place in Sharm el-Sheikh on 3 and 4 May 2007. We stand ready to continue to make our contribution.

We believe that the momentum created by those meetings should not be wasted. We are therefore convinced that the reforms outlined by the International Compact with Iraq and the follow-ups of the Extended Ministerial Conference — namely, the creation of the working groups outlined at the Baghdad Conference of 10 March 2007 — should be implemented without delay and without subordinating them to the creation of new implementing tools.

We are also convinced that, although international support is critical to the success of Iraqi stabilization, the key lies ultimately in the hands of the Iraqi Government and people.

We share the view expressed by Mr. Zebari in his recent letter to the President of the Council that efforts to restore security are to be supported by political initiatives to enhance national reconciliation and promote unity among the Iraqi people. As a matter of fact, the success of any security plan will be possible only if it is adequately supported by national reconciliation, as well as by measures that have an immediate socio-economic impact.

Concrete measures actually needed in this regard include a review of the de-Baathification law; the provision of economic means through, for instance, adequate pensions, to the members of the former Iraqi army and security forces and, when possible, the reinsertion into the new armed forces of those not implicated in crimes of the past regime; the disbanding of militias; the creation of a national police force; and, more generally, a policy that offers all components of society the advantages of the new democratic Iraq, thus enlarging the base of support for the newly formed institutions.

In this framework, we also believe that the process of constitutional revision is of great importance and could provide an opportunity for expanding political dialogue. We are also encouraged by the evaluation contained in the most recent report of the Secretary-General that

> "if some of the amendments currently being discussed are ultimately agreed to, they could go some way towards establishing the basis for the national Government to play a necessary coordinating role within the decentralized federal system envisaged by Iraq's Constitution". (*S/2007/330, para. 25*)

We continue to be concerned about the situation of the internally displaced persons in Iraq and the Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries. Against that backdrop, we welcomed the April Geneva conference, which constituted an important event for fostering international coordination in tackling this issue.

Italy has always been a strong supporter of the role of the United Nations in Iraq. We commend the outstanding work done by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and by Ambassador Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Last March, during the Council's debate on the situation in Iraq (see S/PV.5639), Italy stated that we believed that the United Nations presence in Iraq was of fundamental importance and that we hoped that the conditions in Iraq would allow for its growth. We are therefore pleased that the Secretary-General has expressed his willingness to consider an expanded role and presence in Iraq where and when possible.

We think that an expanded role for the United Nations in Iraq could make an important contribution in many areas. We share the Secretary-General's opinion that solutions must be found through sustained

national dialogue, the patient search for compromise and within the framework of the constitution. In that connection, we also believe that, with the consent of all interested parties, the United Nations could play an essential role.

Allow me to end my remarks by saying that Italy firmly condemns today's heinous attack on the holy shrines of Imam Ali Al-Hadi and Al-Hassan Al-Askari in Samarra. We extend our most heartfelt condolences to the Iraqi people and Government and to the families of the victims. We urge Iraqis to respond to that tragic event by enhancing the ongoing national dialogue and reconciliation.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to thank you for convening this important meeting. I welcome the participation this afternoon of His Excellency Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq. Allow me also to thank Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, Permanent Representative of the United States, and Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, for their briefings to the Council on the activities of the Multinational Force and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, respectively.

The State of Qatar has reiterated the need to respect Iraq's sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity. We have also reaffirmed the need for the Iraqi people to regain their security and freedom, as well as for a commitment by all parties to non-interference in Iraq's internal affairs. It is necessary also to reject all attempts to entrench sectarianism and division and to undermine security and stability in the region. The State of Qatar also considers it important to act expeditiously to identify and address the root causes of the Iraqi crisis, especially given that the situation in the country remains extremely worrisome for all those concerned about Iraq and the region.

In order to extricate the country from its crisis, it is imperative to launch an inclusive, participatory and transparent political process that fulfils the aspirations of all factions in Iraq and integrates those factions into political life and national institutions. It is also imperative to confront the abhorrent sectarianism that now exists in Iraq. The security situation must also be brought under control and the necessary attention paid to development and reconstruction and to meeting the increasing humanitarian needs of the Iraqi population.

Significant efforts have been made to establish stability and security in Iraq both by the Iraqi Government, which months ago launched the Baghdad security plan, and by the Multinational Force. The success of those efforts has been limited in some cases. Obstacles continue to hamper the effort to bring the security situation under control and to end violence, a goal that requires enormous efforts and the strengthening of national security forces to enable them to take control of the situation.

We condemn all acts of terrorist violence in any form and from any source. The targeting of religious sites has grave consequences for the security situation in Iraq.

Expediting the improvement of the basic living conditions of the Iraqi people — a third of whom live under the poverty line, according to the Iraqi central statistical agency — is another priority that must be addressed by the Iraqi Government with the assistance of international partners, the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations. In that regard, the International Compact with Iraq, which was launched at the recent Sharm el-Sheikh meeting, is a useful initiative aimed at strengthening the foundations of peace and relaunching socio-economic and political growth in Iraq over the next five years.

The situation of Iraqi refugees is now a real crisis whose scope and dimensions affect both Iraq and neighbouring States. The conference organized at Geneva in April by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees regarding the humanitarian needs of Iraqi displaced persons helped raise awareness of the need to support displaced persons and the States that host them. This issue continues to be a problem that requires an urgent solution.

At this critical stage in the stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Iraq, the United Nations is playing an important role in the areas of constitutional support, electoral assistance, reconstruction, development, humanitarian assistance, human rights and the rule of law. The world Organization and its specialized agencies are capable of assuming a greater role, with clear guidance from the Security Council and the Iraqi Government. In his report (S/2007/330), the Secretary-General expressed his willingness to

consider expanding the role of the United Nations. In order to do that, however, it is essential to provide the necessary infrastructure and create security conditions conducive to carrying out the task.

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the report (S/2007/330) he has submitted for consideration by members of the Council, which pertains to the fulfilment of the responsibilities entrusted to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). In that connection, we would like to thank Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi for his briefing, as well as Ambassador Khalilzad, Permanent Representative of the United States of America, for his briefing on the activities of the Multinational Force. My delegation also listened with great interest to the statement delivered by His Excellency Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, whose presence here today we welcome.

The overall situation in Iraq continues to be a source of major concern, not just for that country but for the entire Middle East region and the wider international community. We see recurring acts of violence, characterized by almost daily attacks, kidnappings, the taking of hostages and other heinous crimes. With regard to Iraq's rich cultural and religious heritage, which is admired by the entire world, the cost of the damage inflicted upon it is very difficult to ascertain as yet. The dangerous nature of the situation in Iraq has led to the flight of many people who have become displaced or who have simply decided to become exiles in neighbouring countries, in particular Syria and Jordan, thereby creating a major humanitarian problem in the region.

We once again condemn those violent acts, whose continuation and overwhelmingly sectarian character are aimed at nothing less than the destruction of a country, its infrastructure and its political institutions. An example of that was the 12 April 2007 attack against the Council of Representatives. However, the civilian population too is exposed to death and destruction on a daily basis.

We bring up the issue of violence in order to express our impatience as regards urgently finding satisfactory solutions to the enormous challenges to the unity of Iraqi society. Once again, those challenges include national reconciliation. The sharing of political power and equitable distribution of natural resources, in particular oil revenues.

It is mainly the responsibility of Iraqi political and religious leaders to find consensus responses through an inclusive process to the questions and difficulties of all kinds that the country is experiencing. Although the role of Iraq's neighbouring countries and the ongoing support of the international community can no longer be underestimated in the current context, it is important to keep in mind that the United Nations should remain ready to actively support the Iraqi Government. My delegation is aware of the essential role played by UNAMI to that end, and we very much welcome the work it is doing. We also welcome the leadership role of the Secretary-General through the recent initiatives for peace and reconstruction in Iraq. The Secretary-General and the United Nations system overall must stress the coordination of all efforts to help Iraq in order to be in a better position to implement future initiatives, and we can already imagine how great the importance of those initiatives will be.

As part of that effort, we wish to mention in particular the April conference in Geneva on displaced persons held under the auspices of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; the meeting in Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt, on 3 May 2007, where we saw the launching of the International Compact with Iraq; and the enhanced meeting of the neighbouring States of Iraq of 4 May, also in Sharm el-Sheik, which brought Iraq and its neighbouring countries together with the five permanent members of the Security Council and the Group of Eight.

Particular attention should therefore be given to the follow-up of the conclusions of those various meetings, as well as to the work being done in the various committees that are being asked to find domestic legislative solutions to basic issues such as hydrocarbons, provincial elections, political pluralism and amnesty.

My delegation hopes that each and every one of those various initiatives — provided that they are carried out in the interest of the Iraqi population and with a principally political perspective that remains based on consensus, as the current Iraqi authorities have worked together to do — will contribute to re-establishing trust, which is an essential condition for peace and reconstruction in the country.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I too wish to join colleagues in thanking Ambassador Qazi for his presentation on the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/330). I also wish to extend my thanks to His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Iraq for joining the Council to give a presentation on behalf of the Iraqi Government. We are also grateful to Ambassador Khalilzad for his presentation on behalf of the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I).

My Foreign Secretary earlier today strongly condemned the attack on the holy shrines in Samarra and I would like to echo that condemnation in this Chamber, as have many other speakers today. We offer our condolences to the Iraqi people and Government. The attack was a blatant and crude attempt to ferment further sectarian violence and division among the people of Iraq.

The perpetrators of that attack have only one purpose: to destroy the democratic process that the majority of Iraqis clearly support. We welcome Iraqi calls for restraint, and we urge Iraq's political leaders to redouble their efforts towards national reconciliation.

The United Kingdom is committed to the improvement and maintenance of security in Iraq through our military contribution to MNF-I and our diplomatic and development efforts. That remains a complex and challenging task. To accomplish it, we will work closely with the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi security forces to help deliver security to the Iraqi people and to meet the objectives of Security Council resolution 1723 (2006). We will continue to assist in the progressive transfer of security responsibility to the Iraqi security forces. We have now handed over security responsibility for three of the four provinces where the United Kingdom had previously shared that responsibility. We expect to hand over the fourth, Basra, in the second half of this year, should the relevant conditions be met.

We welcome the Secretary-General's emphasis on the launch of the International Compact and the Iraq neighbours conference in Sharm el-Sheik on 3 and 4 May this year. Those events are important steps in focusing the support of the international community on Iraqi needs.

The United Nations and the Government of Iraq have central roles to play in making the International Compact a success. In that regard, I welcome the formation of the Compact secretariat and look forward to the delivery of timely assistance in close cooperation with the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq and with the donor community.

As we have emphasized in previous debates on Iraq, the role of Iraq's neighbours remains crucial to improvements in security, reconstruction and national reconciliation — and that also is a point made by many speakers today. I urge those neighbours to show their support for the Government of Iraq through the three working groups established by the neighbours conference. Progress in each of the working groups' remits — security cooperation, fuel imports and Iraqi refugees — would directly help the Iraqi people. But the United Kingdom would also urge the Government of Iraq to take advantage of the window of opportunity offered by the Baghdad security plan to deliver on national reconciliation. The central pillar of that is agreement by Iraq's leaders to a revised Iraqi constitution that gives all communities a firm stake in Iraq's future. We welcome the valuable contributions of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) to the constitutional review process.

I share the concern of other representatives today that as part of the political process, it is essential that there is early agreement on legislation governing the future of the oil and gas sector, including how the huge potential wealth generated by it will be shared equitably among all communities in Iraq. Agreement also needs to be reached on reform of the process of de-Baathification. The United Kingdom encourages the Iraqi parliament to pass legislation setting a date for provincial elections, which will address the representation of all parts of Iraqi society at the provincial level.

Those are difficult issues where there are conflicting views and interests, but for precisely those reasons we encourage the Government of Iraq to be ambitious. In support of those objectives we welcome the clear request of His Excellency Minister Zebari for UNAMI and the United Nations agencies to play an enhanced role. As part of that, the United Nations has a unique role in supporting the political process. We look forward to discussion within the Security Council and with the Government of Iraq on reviewing UNAMI's mandate ahead of the expiry in August of resolution 1700 (2006).

The United Kingdom remains concerned about the humanitarian situation in Iraq and the increasing numbers of people who have been displaced by ongoing violence. It is vital that the response from the international community is clearly focused and coordinated. We encourage UNAMI's Humanitarian Coordinator and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to continue their efforts to put into operational effect the United Nations strategic framework for humanitarian action. The action plan flowing from that should direct and coordinate the efforts of the United Nations agencies, and we urge the agencies to give their full support to that process.

The United Kingdom recognizes the security difficulties that we all face when working in Iraq, and we should like to pay tribute to the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team in the face of those difficulties. We support the Secretary-General's proposal to fund the expeditious construction of a new United Nations building in Baghdad from within the budgeting provisions for special political missions. We welcome the possibility that the United Nations presence in Irbil will expand, and we look forward to the United Nations re-establishing its presence in Basra.

Finally, the United Kingdom welcomes the Secretary-General's personal commitment to Iraq, including his own visit to Baghdad earlier this year. That will have sent a clear signal to the Iraqi people of the priority the United Nations and the international community places on helping Iraq.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): Let me join previous speakers in thanking Mr. Qazi for his informative briefing. We also thank Ambassador Khalilzad for his report on behalf of the countries making up the Multinational Force, including my own country. In addition, we welcome the presence at this meeting of His Excellency Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, the Foreign Minister of Iraq, and thank him for his comprehensive statement.

First, I wish to commend the ongoing efforts of the United Nations and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), under the leadership of Mr. Qazi, and their dedicated work in Iraq under truly difficult and challenging conditions and circumstances. We share the view of Mr. Zebari that strong United Nations involvement in Iraq's reconstruction and stabilization is instrumental. In that regard, we are encouraged by the fact that the Secretary-General is considering expanding the role and presence of the United Nations in Iraq where possible. We wish to emphasize our support in that respect.

We also welcome the launching of the International Compact with Iraq. Slovakia commends the Iraqi Government for the ambitious commitments it made in the Compact. We believe that timely implementation of those commitments will be central in developing and expanding the cooperation between Iraq and all its international partners, including the United Nations.

We also welcome the outcomes of the ministerial conference among Iraq's neighbouring countries with international participation, which took place in Sharm el-Sheikh on 4 May. We hope that the conference will give rise to a long-term process of regional confidence-building through dialogue and cooperation. Moreover, we are encouraged by the decision to activate the technical committees on security, refugees and energy. In our view, it is important to maintain the momentum that has been built and to seek further ways to strengthen mutual collaboration in order to address the ongoing challenges in Iraq.

At the same time, we believe that regional actors, and particularly Iraq's immediate neighbours, could and should play a more active role in promoting peace and stability in Iraq, which would benefit not only that country, but also its neighbours and the wider region. Their contributions to the success of Iraq's stabilization therefore remain instrumental.

All these efforts and initiatives and their outcomes show the international community's new level of solidarity with and commitment to Iraq, as well as its willingness to contribute actively in tackling the many challenges faced by that country and its people. However, to ensure full success, the active and full engagement of the Iraqi Government in the process of transition and stabilization remains decisive. Simply put, Iraqi ownership of that process is crucial. As the Secretary-General rightly puts it in paragraph 64 of his report (S/2007/330), "Solutions must be found through sustained national dialogue, the patient search for compromise, and within the framework of the Constitution". We hope that those principles will be reflected in all efforts to achieve lasting and sustainable peace and stability in Iraq.

In that regard, we welcome the progress achieved in the constitutional review process and commend the Constitutional Review Committee for its constructive role. We also welcome the establishment of the Independent High Electoral Commission as a notable recent achievement. On the other hand, we regret that progress was delayed on some other vital legislation, such as laws on hydrocarbons, provincial elections, de-Baathification and amnesty. We also regret that the level of violence, terrorist and sectarian attacks, human rights violations and general insecurity is still high in Iraq. That remains a source of constant concern for us. We strongly condemn all such acts of violence, including today's shocking attack on one of the holiest sites in Shia Islam, the holy shrine of Imam Ali Al-Hadi and Imam Hassan Al-Askari in Samarra. We join and support the Secretary-General in his call on all Iraqis to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid sinking into a vicious cycle of revenge.

Finally, it is also important that all possible efforts be undertaken to address the increasing humanitarian suffering of a large number of Iraqi refugees and displaced persons. In that regard, we welcome the international conference organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, held in Geneva on 17 and 18 April, to address the needs of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as its positive and constructive outcomes. However, here again — and especially in this particular case — we view it as imperative it is to promote inclusive national dialogue and reconciliation among all constituencies and communities in Iraq. Only such an approach can effectively prevent further outflows of people and enable Iraqi refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes.

In conclusion, I would like to underline Slovakia's readiness to support and assist the process of peacebuilding and reconstruction in Iraq.

Mr. Soler Torrijos (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation would like to join preceding speakers in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq; we thank Mr. Zalmay Khalilzad, Permanent Representative of the United States, for his briefing on behalf of Multinational Force and Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, for his briefing.

The continuing anxiety of Iraqi citizens is a source of concern for us. We are particularly concerned about the situation of humanitarian personnel, who are attempting to alleviate the hardships of a population exposed to constant conflict, kidnappings and attacks. We are also concerned about the situation faced by those who are participating in the reconstruction of the country. All we ask is that the parties to the conflict stop endangering the lives of innocent people.

We have also noted that the spiral of violence has compelled entire populations to leave in order to escape the violence. New restrictions on the migration of displaced persons to other countries in the region are complicating the human tragedy. We realize how burdensome those movements are. However, we urge neighbouring Governments to put humanitarian needs before cold calculations concerning migration.

In this critical situation, greater financial commitments will be essential. UNICEF's figures regarding the situation of children and the lack of access to drinking water and food reflect the gradual deterioration seen in statistical indicators. It is imperative to coordinate a comprehensive strategy that does not leave these populations adrift.

We recognize that there are also reasons for encouragement. The international community unanimously recognizes the great importance of the situation in Iraq. The International Compact with Iraq gives us cause for optimism. Combined with the goodwill of creditor countries in forgiving the debt of the Iraqi State, it is an unequivocal signal of the international community's interest in promoting the development of Iraq. The energy invested by the Iraqi Government in promoting peacebuilding, the human rights monitoring being carried out by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), its technical assistance to strengthen Iraq's electoral system and constitutional organization, and the World Food Programme's assistance efforts aimed at vulnerable groups are also to be commended.

Finally, we support UNAMI and the Government of Iraq in their efforts to achieve a peaceful Iraq with a democratic Government and without foreign troops. We can attain those objectives only if we insist tenaciously on national dialogue. As the Iraqi poet Salah Al-Hamdani urges us, "We must still traverse/ side by side/the barbed wire of words". Undoubtedly, the results obtained by the Independent High Electoral

Commission and the Constitutional Review Committee will be effective only if they reflect a sincere desire — of which we now see little evidence — to find a political solution to the impasse afflicting Iraq.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): Let me join other delegations in welcoming the Foreign Minister of Iraq to the Council and in thanking him for his presentation. My delegation is also grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Qazi, for his comprehensive briefing.

Iraq and the Iraqis, like other nations, have every right to live in peace, without fear and in dignity. My delegation, therefore, is very concerned over the continuing political, sectarian and criminal violence that deprives the Iraqis of these rights.

We note the pause in sectarian conflict after the introduction of a security plan, but it was so brief and so frivolous that a chance for sustainable peace could not be seized. Now, clashes among factions continue and hostilities occur on an almost daily basis.

Indonesia condemns all terrorist attacks. In this regard, we express our deep sympathy to the families of the victims of today's attack in Sammara.

We welcome the commitment of the Iraqi Government to security and stability as its highest priority, not only in Baghdad, but also in the rest of the country. However, my delegation stresses the urgent need for the protection of civilians and the strict observance of international human rights and humanitarian law whenever security measures are enacted upon.

Atrocities in Iraq cannot be fully responded to by a security approach. Those acts are rooted in the complexities with which the Iraqis continue to grapple. In our view, a soft-power approach that promotes inclusiveness and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms must also be sought. In this regard, Indonesia supports the efforts of the Iraqi Government to engage leaders from across the political and religious spectrum to promote confidence-building through national dialogue and reconciliation.

In realizing its commitment to support Iraqi unity, on 3 and 4 April 2007 Indonesia hosted the International Conference of Islamic Leaders for Reconciliation in Iraq. The Conference adopted a declaration aimed at realizing inclusive reconciliation based on such values as peace, justice and equality, freedom, tolerance, balance and consultation.

My delegation also underlines the significance of national dialogue and recognizes the urgency of seeking reconciliation within the governing coalition. We support Prime Minister Al-Maliki's efforts to promote the unity of government.

The humanitarian consequences of the continuing violence in Iraq are a matter of great concern to my delegation. We highly appreciate the role of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian actors in addressing the needs of the Iraqi internally displaced persons and refugees. We commend the generosity of the receiving countries. My delegation welcomes the convening in Geneva in April 2007 of an international conference on displaced Iraqis. That was an important initiative in seeking collective solutions to the humanitarian challenges that affect the region as a whole.

Considering the magnitude of challenges that the Iraqis are facing now, support and assistance from countries in the region and the international community remain critical. Only through their contribution can Iraq fulfil its enormous human and economic potential.

Indonesia welcomes the convening of the expanded ministerial conference of neighbouring countries of Iraq in Sharm el-Sheikh on 4 May 2007. We look forward to the implementation of the three technical committees established at the conference on security, displaced Iraqis and energy supplies.

My delegation also attaches particular importance to the International Compact with Iraq, which marks a new partnership between Iraq and the international community. We fully support the role of the United Nations in helping Iraq achieve the goals of the Compact.

With regard to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, we continue to underline its importance in providing Iraq with constitutional support activities, electoral assistance, human rights promotion and development and humanitarian assistance. We welcome the intention of the Secretary-General to consider an expanded role and presence of the United Nations in Iraq. Under the current circumstances, in our view, there are at least three possible ways to enhance the role of the United Nations in Iraq. These are the flexible presence of more

United Nations institutions in the country; a greater institutional foothold at United Nations Headquarters; and stronger United Nations support for Iraq in various international processes.

Iraq is experiencing a major transformation. We empathize with the challenges with which the Iraqis are dealing in such a process. A transformation of this magnitude cannot be done instantly and hastily. Indonesia reaffirms its full support for the Iraqis in their pursuit of a peaceful, stable, prosperous and democratic Iraq.

Ms. Qwabe (South Africa): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Qazi and Ambassador Khalilzad for their briefings, and we welcome Foreign Minister Zebari and thank him for his briefing as well.

My delegation remains concerned that the security situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate. We maintain that a new resolution to the conflict in Iraq has to include an all-inclusive political process and national reconciliation, as well as constructive dialogue with all neighbouring States.

We welcome the launch of the International Compact with Iraq, and we note the commitment of the participants to work in partnership with the Government of Iraq to ensure stability, security and economic reconstruction. Initiatives such as the expanded ministerial conference of neighbouring countries of Iraq, held in Sharm el-Sheikh on 4 May, and the meeting of the United States and Iran in Baghdad on 28 May are also welcome.

A report issued this month by Global Policy Forum indicates that as of April 2007, an estimated 1.9 million Iraqis were displaced within the country and over 2.2 million were refugees abroad. The Iraqi Government estimates that 50,000 people are leaving their homes each month. The scale of the problem and the difficulty of reaching the displaced put the crisis practically beyond the capacity of the international relief system.

The International Advisory and Monitoring Board for the Development Fund for Iraq met in Amman on 2 and 3 June 2007. A key finding was that, while the current situation in Iraq is challenging, it is worrisome that insufficient progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses revealed in the area of this report. The latest audit report of the Development Fund for Iraq submitted to the Board by Ernst and Young indicates that while many efforts are being made, sometimes at great personal sacrifice, the overall financial system of control is deficient and financial management reform needs to be pursued further. The audit also notes large unreconciled differences regarding oil extraction, production and reported export sales because there is no overall comprehensive system of controls over oil revenues. A system of metering, as recommended by the Board, would go a long way in improving overall control. The audit also notes that basic administrative procedures in ministries are outdated and ineffective, and the system of overall financial governance needs to be strengthened.

The Security Council has the responsibility to ensure that the natural resources of Iraq are used in a transparent manner to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, for the economic reconstruction and repair of Iraq's infrastructure and for other purposes benefiting the people of Iraq. It is therefore essential that the Security Council discusses and acts on the findings of the Board without delay.

We reiterate that, notwithstanding the events that led to the current situation, the Security Council has a responsibility for ensuring that the powers it granted to the Multinational Force are exercised in a manner consistent with the Council's decision and that international law and human rights are upheld and respected by all parties.

We note that the Secretary-General reports that the security situation in Iraq remains complex and unpredictable and is a major limiting factor for the United Nations presence and activities in Iraq. The United Nations has a particularly important role to play, but the full potential of the Organization to assist the Iraqi people can be realized only when its personnel can operate freely in a secure environment.

In conclusion, we also support the draft press statement presented by the delegation of the United States of America.

Mr. Gallardo (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to welcome to the Council the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Hoshyar Zebari. I would like also to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ashraf Qazi, for his briefing and the representative of the United States for his briefing on behalf of the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I).

The circumstances in which we are meeting today continue to be critical in Iraq, as illustrated, once again, by the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/330), and by the most recent reports of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) on the human rights situation in that country. Violence has intensified again, following the initial drop in criminal acts of sectarian origin that resulted from the implementation of the Baghdad security plan — although, unfortunately, we do not have official data. The attacks are nevertheless being repeated, as happened this morning at the Al-Askari shrine. Likewise, the violence in Basra has caused the United Nations to leave its headquarters in that city. Peru condemns the sectarian violence and acts of ethnic, tribal or religious intolerance, and it rejects all terrorist acts committed in Iraq.

Moreover, the reconciliation agenda seems plagued with difficulties. Reconstruction is very slow and the consequences of the conflict are reflected in dramatic figures, such as the existence of 30,000 to 50,000 new refugees each month, the more than 800,000 internally displaced persons, according to some figures, and the fact that 17 per cent of primary school students have left school or that only 34 per cent of girls and 43 per cent of boys attend secondary school, and that university education has been severely affected by the violence. The levels of malnutrition also show a deterioration of social indicators. These are factors that cast a shadow over the future of Iraq, despite the efforts of the Government to make progress in the area of security or in the stabilization of the currency and the economy.

Regrettably, the seriousness of the situation has still not generated in those Iraqis who seek to secure a future for their country a quick but sustained mobilization towards the dialogue that could be opened up in their country in order to deal with the basic issues that are affecting life for everyone.

The Iraqis and their authorities first and foremost, as well as the neighbouring countries, the regional players and other external players present in Iraq, must act with the greatest caution and the utmost diligence in the current situation to find ways out of delicate situations and move the country forward in key areas, such as constitutional reform, the distribution of oil revenues, the distribution of regional and federal power, the situation of Kirkuk, the changes in the de-Baathification process and the creation of national security bodies which are effective, credible and legitimate, as well as cooperating in the stability of the country and in the full recovery of its sovereignty.

The task of reconstruction in Iraq is a central subject for its Government and, unfortunately, there have been many delays and much backsliding because of the situation of insecurity and ungovernability. The International Compact with Iraq is an important reference point for international assistance. Conditions for its implementation will be enhanced with improved security, reconciliation, transparency and laws that reflect solid political agreements for the management of natural resources. Iraq's oil wealth must be handled responsibly and with transparency. The distribution of oil revenues must be negotiated, which will help to reinforce the spirit of understanding among Iraqis and their trust that these resources will be used to build a better future, particularly for the country's citizens.

It is clear that what is needed is an evaluation of the strategic orientation and of the means necessary for all the internal players in Iraq to regain the country's stability and its viability as unified, sovereign and independent State. At this stage, that includes an evaluation of the presence in the country of the Multinational Force, of which the Government of Iraq has asked for an extension.

Peru supports the initiatives to contribute to re-establishing trust among all sectors of Iraqi society. We hope that these initiatives will be translated into a drop in the level of violence in the country, particularly in Baghdad and in other multi-ethnic and pluricultural cities that have seen an increase in violent acts.

We encourage the Government of Iraq and those responsible for its security forces to act with determination to implement security and protection policies for all of its citizens and to strengthen the central control of its public powers. Caution dictates that all types of internal confrontations between Iraqis should be discouraged since in the long run the consequences of an escalation are unpredictable. At the same time, we repeat that the use of force must be carried out in full respect of the international commitments undertaken, particularly those in the area of human rights and international humanitarian law.

There must be no room for impunity in the construction of democratic institutions in Iraq. The raison d'être of the Iraqi State is the defence of the life and the human rights of its citizens, and whoever

attacks the rule of law and the human rights of the citizens of Iraq must be brought to justice.

Finally, my delegation would like to express its support for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. We feel that it should continue to function in accordance with its mandate and with the options in the field in the consolidation of all the tasks that contribute to political and legal stability, to institutional and economic reconstruction, and to provide humanitarian aid and to protect human rights in Iraq.

Mr. Li Junhua (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation welcomes the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Mr. Zebari, at today's meeting of the Security Council. We also wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Qazi, and Ambassador Khalilzad of the United States for their briefings.

China strongly condemns the attack on the holy shrine of Imam Ali al-Hadi in Iraq today. We call upon the various factions of Iraq to maintain unity and exercise restraint so as to stabilize the situation as soon as possible.

Since the end of the Iraq war, the people of that country have been traversing an extremely unusual path, having overcome enormous difficulties under exceptional circumstances. The people of Iraq have basically completed the political transition as provided by resolution 1546 (2004). At present, Iraq is entering a new phase of development, where unity, stability and development are the three major objectives that it is striving to attain.

First, unity is the basis for stability. All ethnic and religious groups should place the overall interest of the nation above everything else by facilitating dialogue, overcoming differences and promoting reconciliation on such sensitive issues as the constitution and legislation. The Government of Iraq should spare no efforts in seeking the views of people in all walks of life, with a view to reaching consensus on a programme that satisfies all parties. In this regard, we appreciate the constructive efforts made by the Constitutional Review Committee and the Independent High Electoral Commission.

Secondly, stability is the prerequisite for development. Undeniably, how to improve the security situation is the biggest challenge that Iraq now faces. It will determine the future course of political, economic and social development in Iraq. We have taken note of the measures taken by the Government of Iraq and by the Multinational Force in order to improve the security situation and of the results achieved in this regard. We hope that the Iraqi Government will be able gradually to take on more responsibility for its national security and thereby address the root causes of the security problem. That is also what the Iraqi people have been awaiting anxiously.

Thirdly, the pursuit of unity and stability has development as its objective. The Government should strive to achieve rapid progress in the field of economic reconstruction, improve the lives of its people and create a mechanism for the independent development of Iraq. Last month the International Compact with Iraq was launched at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, where proposed measures for the reconstruction of Iraq were considered and the international consensus was reaffirmed. We hope that, with the joint efforts of all the parties concerned, the International Compact will be implemented.

The unity, stability and development of Iraq cannot be achieved without the support and participation of its neighbouring States and the international community as a whole. In that regard, we welcome the expanded ministerial meeting of Foreign Ministers of States neighbouring Iraq held at Sharm el-Sheikh last month, as well as the consultations held between the United States and Iraq at the ambassadorial level. We hope that the parties concerned will continue their efforts to find an adequate solution to other regional hotspots through dialogue and consultation, so as to create an environment conducive to the settlement of the question of Iraq.

We support the taking of active measures by the United Nations, where conditions permit, with a view to expanding its role in the political and economic reconstruction of Iraq.

As a longstanding friend of the people of Iraq, China supports the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Iraq and advocates the finding of an adequate solution to the differences between the various factions in Iraq through a political process and in a peaceful and democratic manner.

China appreciates the efforts made by the Government of Iraq aimed at achieving reconciliation and at stabilizing the situation. China supports the

efforts made to speed up the reconstruction of Iraq, in accordance with the principle of equality and openness, and to improve the lives of the Iraqi people and the humanitarian situation in the country.

The Chinese Government will provide 5 million yuan renminbi in free aid to Iraq, which will be earmarked for the health and education fields, inter alia. The Chinese Government is ready drastically to reduce the Iraqi debt to China and to cancel all governmental debt to China. China sincerely hopes that, with the support and assistance of the international community and the unremitting efforts of the people themselves, the Iraqi people will at an early date achieve the rule of Iraq by the Iraqis themselves and enjoy peace, tranquillity and prosperity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a brief statement in my capacity as representative of Belgium.

I, too, would like to thank the Special Representative, Ambassador Qazi, for his statement, as well as Ambassador Khalilzad for his statement on behalf of the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I).

Once again, I welcome the presence of His Excellency Hoshyar Zebari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, and convey to him our Government's firm condemnation of the attacks that took place today against the shrines of the Imams Ali Al-Hadi and Al-Hassan Al-Askari in Samarra, which are aimed at fomenting additional sectarian violence.

During our prior discussions, Belgium had shared the concern expressed by the Secretary-General about the danger that violence in Iraq poses to a society, institutions and a political process that remain fragile. While there is no clear improvement in the security and humanitarian situation in the country, we note the first signs of a growing awareness of the situation in Iraq in the region and in the international community as a whole.

When one adds the daily casualties of sectarian and terrorist violence to the more than 4 million refugees in and outside of Iraq, it becomes clear that this crisis involves not only Iraq; its consequences affect us all.

At the political level, Iraq's neighbours and the rest of the international community, after being deeply divided on the Iraqi issue, saw that no solution was possible in the absence of a unified and sustained commitment involving the Iraqi authorities. No actor alone can resolve the problems currently facing Iraq. It is only by overcoming the sectarian, regional and international divisions that the Iraqi people can achieve the peace and security that they so richly deserve.

In the past few months, this greater awareness has resulted in a number of initiatives, which Belgium welcomes and in which it participated directly or through the European Union. In April the Geneva Conference on displaced persons was held, organized by the High Commissioner for Refugees. In early May, the International Compact was launched at Sharm el-Sheikh, immediately followed by the ministerial conference bringing together Iraq, its neighbours and a number of major international stakeholders.

The holding of those conferences bears witness to the re-involvement of regional and international actors in support of a process of reconciliation and reconstruction in Iraq. The long-term success of the efforts undertaken at those meetings and of the current momentum depends, however, on developing follow-up mechanisms to those conferences. The United Nations, the Secretary-General and his Special Representative have played key roles in these various processes. Mindful of the very unfavourable security conditions prevailing in Iraq, Belgium deems it crucial that the political and consultation role played by the United Nations and hopes to see it strengthened and expanded.

Moreover, we support the ongoing presence of the MNF-I, as requested by the Iraqi Government and called for in resolution 1723 (2006). Although their support is vital, we must recall that the efforts of neither the international community nor the United Nations nor Iraq's neighbours can substitute for the responsible actions of the Iraqis themselves. Belgium would therefore encourage the Iraqi authorities to intensify their efforts towards national reconciliation, with particular attention paid to the constitutional review process. We would also emphasize the need to strengthen the rule of law, in particular by establishing security forces loyal to the central Government and independent of sectarian or partisan allegiances.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to Mr. Qazi to respond to comments made and questions raised.

Mr. Qazi: I think that it remains for me to thank the member countries for their very valuable observations and comments. There were not too many questions as such, but we have taken due note of them and will be guided by them.

Iraq is, of course, at a critical point in its transition process, and it is entitled to the support of the international community, the region and its neighbours in the various measures it is taking to bring about a new Iraq in which all participants can share in its prosperity, peace and stability. I wish to assure the Council that the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) stands ready, even in these challenging circumstances — always subject to security, which we have to take into account — and intends to be there in sufficient numbers in order to meet the expectations of the Government and people of Iraq. We believe that we have the capacity, and we certainly have the intention, to respond to any request from the Government of Iraq and the international community, as expressed in the Council, to play a greater role if that is what is required, always circumstances permitting.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Qazi for the clarifications he has provided.

There are no further speakers on the list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5694

Security Council

Sixty-second year

Provisional

5694th meeting

Wednesday, 13 June 2007, 5.45 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Verbeke	(Belgium)
Members:	China	Mr. Li Kexin
	Congo	Mr. Biabaroh-Iboro
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Azzarello
	Panama	Mr. De Vengoechea
	Peru	Mr. Ruiz Rosas
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Henzab
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Mlynár
	South Africa	Mr. Laher
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Williams
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

07-38179 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 5.45 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Lebanon, in which she requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council.

(*spoke in English*)

"The Security Council unequivocally condemns the terrorist attack in Beirut on 13 June 2007, which killed at least nine persons, including Member of Parliament Walid Eido, and injured several others. The Security Council expresses its deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and Government of Lebanon.

"The Security Council commends the determination and commitment of the Government of Lebanon to bring to justice the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of this and other assassinations and underlines its determination to support the Government of Lebanon in its efforts to this end.

"The Security Council condemns any attempt to destabilize Lebanon, including through political assassination or other terrorist acts. The Security Council reiterates its full support to the ongoing efforts by the Government and people of Lebanon to combat terrorism, solidify democracy and institutions through national dialogue and extend the authority of the Lebanese Government throughout its territory.

"The Security Council calls upon all parties in Lebanon and the region to show restraint and a sense of responsibility with a view to preventing any further deterioration of the situation in Lebanon. The Security Council urges all States, in accordance with its resolutions 1373 (2001), 1566 (2004) and 1624 (2005), to cooperate fully in the fight against terrorism.

"The Security Council reaffirms its previous calls upon all parties concerned to cooperate fully and urgently with the Security Council for the full implementation of all relevant resolutions, in particular those concerning the restoration of the territorial integrity, full sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to continue to follow closely and report regularly to the Council on the situation in Lebanon."

(*spoke in French*)

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2007/18.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5695

Security Council

Sixty-second year

Provisional

5695th meeting

Thursday, 14 June 2007, 12.15 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Verbeke	(Belgium)
Members:	China	Mr. Du Xiacong
	Congo	Mr. Nsemi
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Ghana	Mr. Appreku
	Indonesia	Mr. Suryo-di-Puro
	Italy	Mr. Azzarello
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Peru	Mr. Chávez
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Henzab
	Russian Federation	Mr. Smirnov
	Slovakia	Mr. Mlynár
	South Africa	Ms. Dye
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Johnston
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

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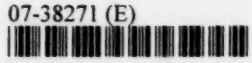
07-38271 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 12.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Somalia

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Somalia in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mohamed (Somalia) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council reiterates its previous resolutions and presidential statements on Somalia, in particular its resolution 1744 (2007) and presidential statement S/PRST/2007/13, adopted on 30 April 2007.

"The Security Council reiterates its support for the National Reconciliation Congress as a mechanism for much-needed political dialogue and reconciliation in Somalia. The Security Council calls on the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the National Governance and Reconciliation Committee to ensure that the Congress convenes as soon as practicable. The Security Council appreciates the efforts of Member States and partners to support the early convening of the Congress and calls for further support. The Security Council underscores the importance of the Congress addressing in a comprehensive and meaningful manner issues of political reconciliation, including representation in the Transitional Federal Institutions, and agreeing a roadmap for the remainder of the transitional political process, in line with the Transitional Federal Charter and as laid out in the Roadmap to Governance, National Dialogue, and Reconciliation in Somalia of 14 March 2007.

"The Security Council expresses its grave concern regarding the recent pattern of attacks by extremist elements in Somalia, including the increased use of explosive devices, and condemns all attempts to use violence to undermine the political process and prevent the early convening of the National Reconciliation Congress. The Security Council calls on all Member States to cease immediately any further support for extremist elements or those who seek to block progress by violent means, and to support the ongoing efforts towards inclusive political dialogue. The Security Council recalls its readiness, as set out in its resolution 1744 (2007), to consider measures against those who block progress in the political process and threaten the Transitional Federal Institutions.

"The Security Council condemns the attack on the Prime Minister on 3 June 2007 and the attack on the forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in Mogadishu on 16 May 2007. The Security Council expresses its deepest sympathies to the families of the victims.

"The Security Council underlines its appreciation for the efforts of the Ugandan forces currently deployed in Mogadishu under AMISOM and Uganda's invaluable contribution to peace and stability in Somalia. The Security Council reiterates its call on Member States of the African Union to contribute troops for AMISOM, and on other States and partners to provide financial, technical and logistical support for this effort.

"The Security Council emphasizes the urgent need for appropriate contingency planning for a possible United Nations mission, to be deployed in Somalia if the Security Council decided to authorize such a mission. The Security Council looks forward to receiving the report from the Secretary-General regarding progress in this regard by mid-June.

"The Security Council emphasizes again the need for strengthened efforts to provide humanitarian relief assistance to Somalia, including assistance to the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons, urges Member States to support generously such operations, and demands that all parties ensure unfettered access for humanitarian assistance."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2007/19.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5696

Security Council

Sixty-second year

Provisional

5696th meeting

Friday, 15 June 2007, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Verbeke	(Belgium)
Members:	China	Mr. Li Kexin
	Congo	Mr. Biabaroh-Iboro
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Panama	Mr. Soler Torrijos
	Peru	Mr. Pérez
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Smirnov
	Slovakia	Mr. Mlynár
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Williams
	United States of America	Mr. Brencick

Agenda

The situation in Cyprus

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus (S/2007/328)

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07-38399 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Cyprus

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus (S/2007/328)

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus, document S/2007/328.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/2007/353, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

I should like to inform the Council that, in my capacity as President of the Council, I have met with the representatives of the parties, who have confirmed to me that they maintain their well-known positions vis-à-vis the item on the Council 's agenda. On the basis of those meetings, as President, with the consent of the members of the Council, I have drawn the conclusion that the Council can proceed to take a decision on the draft resolution (S/2007/353) before it.

If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, China, Congo, France, Ghana, Indonesia, Italy, Panama, Peru, Qatar, Russian Federation, Slovakia, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*spoke in French*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1758 (2007).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.